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THE STATESMEN SERIES.

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CHARLES JAMES FOX.

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STATESMEN SERIES.

LIFE OF

CHARLES JAMES FOX.

BY

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PREFACE.

To write an adequate biography of Charles James Fox would be to write the history of the reign of George III., in its social as well as its political aspects. The magnitude of the task is perhaps the chief reason why no one has yet done for Fox what Lord Stanhope has done for Pitt, and Mr. Stapleton for Canning. To some extent, however, Fox has undoubtedly suffered for leaving behind him too obvious a biographer. The breath had scarcely left his body before a crowd of Memoirs and Reminiscences made their appearance, of which the volumes of Mr. Fell and Colonel Trotter are the best known, but no one ventured to interfere with the undoubted prerogative of the third Lord Holland—the Young One of Fox's correspondence—to write the biography of the great Whig leader which should be a κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί. A series of misfortunes prevented the work from ever being begun, and it was not till 1853 that the materials, which Lord Holland had collected and Mr. Allen had annotated, were given to the world by Lord Russell, under the title of Memoirs and Correspondence of C. J. Fox. Thirteen years afterwards, at the fag end of a busy political career, Lord Russell was able at last to publish

the long-promised Life, when Fox had been in his grave nearly sixty years. Much of the personal and political interest in his career had by that time died away, and Lord Russell himself would have been the first to acknowledge that the work when published was very different in scope and character to that which was originally conceived. Since then the brilliant and attractive essay of Sir George Trevelyan upon English politics and society at the beginning of the reign of George III., published under the title of the Early History of Charles James Fox, has been the only serious historical work which has dealt with the subject. It would seem indeed as if interest in Charles James Fox had in recent years been steadily decreasing. The references to him in Lord Macaulay's writings are extremely few, while in modern periodical literature his name hardly ever appears except as the hero of an anecdote. While Burke has become the storehouse of political wisdom to politicians of all parties, references to Fox's opinions and quotations from his speeches are rarely found.

Under such circumstances I hope it will not be deemed presumptuous in me to attempt to present in a short and condensed form a sketch of the political career of Fox as a statesman, which may serve to recall to men's minds the part which he played at a very important crisis of his country's history. It is obviously impossible to compress within the limits of a work like this a complete history of the times or of the man. Much has necessarily to be left out, and, remembering that in this series I am specially called to deal with my subject as a statesman,

I have accordingly endeavoured to fix my attention particularly upon his public life, and upon those parts of his private life and traits of his private character, which had a definite influence upon his public career. The connection between the two in the case of Fox is obvious enough, and I do not pretend to do anything more in the following pages than to elucidate and illustrate it.

Among the authorities on which I have mainly relied may be mentioned 'Memoirs and Correspondence of C. J. Fox,' and 'The Life and Times of C. J. Fox,' by Lord Russell; 'Fox's Collected Speeches;' Sir G. Trevelyan's 'Early History of Charles James Fox;' Colonel Trotter's 'Memoirs of Fox;' Rogers' 'Recollections of C. J. Fox;' 'Gilbert Wakefield's Correspondence with C. J. Fox;' Horace Walpole's 'Memoirs and Journals;' 'Burke's Speeches and Correspondence;' 'Selwyn's Life and Letters;' Moore's 'Life of Sheridan;' 'Memoirs of the Court Cabinets of George III.,' by the Duke of Buckingham; 'Memoirs of Lord Minto;' Sir G. Cornewall Lewis's 'Administrations of Great Britain;' Stanhope's 'Life of Pitt;' Gillray's 'Caricatures;' Lord Albemarle's 'Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham;' Fitzmaurice's 'Life of Shelburne;' 'The Correspondence of George III., and Lord North;' Lord Holland's 'Memoirs of the Whig Party;' 'The Diaries of the first Earl of Malmesbury;' &c. I need hardly add that during the period which he has as yet covered, the guidance of Mr. Lecky's clear sight and comprehensive mind has been indispensable.

H. O. W.

OXFORD, 1890.

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CHARLES JAMES FOX.

CHAPTER I.

FOX AS A TORY.

1749–1774.

"Mr. Fox never had any principle,"—"Il n'a nul espèce de principes, et il regarde avec pitié tous ceux qui en ont." Such were the criticisms passed on the public and private conduct of Charles James Fox, in the height of his parliamentary fame, by no mean judges of human nature, George III. and Madame du Deffand. From the damaging effect of those criticisms Fox's reputation never yet has been, nor indeed can be, wholly freed. Despite his brilliant services to the Whig party, despite the magic sway of his eloquence, despite the rare gifts of his singularly winning nature, there hangs across his career from first to last, like a storm-cloud on a sunny April sky, the dark shadow of an unprincipled life. The reason is not far to seek. He was a spoiled child from the cradle to the grave. Petted and indulged by his father in his childhood, he was petted and indulged by his party in his maturity. Even his opponents could hardly believe him to be in earnest, and after having been for an hour

the object of his most trenchant vituperation, Lord North would be content to reply with a good-humoured joke. It was not to be wondered at, that under such circumstances Fox found it difficult to take politics seriously, and to look at them in any other light than a game as interesting and less expensive than faro or quinze. A gambler at Brookes's, he was a gambler at St. Stephen's. He played as recklessly in one place as in the other. In both places much of his recklessness was due to the training he had received from his father. Never was son more obedient, never had son less cause for his obedience. Deliberately educated in vice from a schoolboy, laughed out of any scruples which might struggle to the surface, encouraged to indulge every whim and every desire, he could not but lose the niceness of moral judgment, and could not but fail to appreciate the importance of moral principle. To Lord Holland belongs the infamous distinction of having been among the most corrupt of fathers as well as the most corrupt of the statesmen of his time.

Born on the 24th of January, 1749, Charles Fox was sent to Eton in the autumn of 1758, but he had not been five years at school before he was taken by his father on a tour to Spa and Paris, and at the age of fourteen was introduced by him to the witty and abandoned society of gamblers and debauchees in which Lord Holland then lived. In 1764 he attained the dignity of a sixth-form boy, but in the autumn of that year he left Eton for Oxford, and matriculated as a commoner of Hertford College at what would now be considered the ridiculously early age of fifteen. Two years more, divided between hard work at Oxford and dissipation at Paris, sufficed to complete his education as far as the University was concerned. Another two years of Continental travel, chiefly spent in Paris and Italy, gave him a considerable knowledge of

foreign languages, and a thorough acquaintance with the lower aspects of Parisian life. At the age of nineteen, when most men now-a-days are just entering on their University career, and are beginning to realise the existence of Logic and of Ethics, Charles Fox was returned for the pocket borough of Midhurst, and stepped out on the parliamentary arena in the spring of 1769 an accomplished scholar, a versatile man of the world, and a finished rake.

He had many of the qualifications necessary for a successful politician. Gifted by nature with a fine presence, and a figure, which, if portly, was not as yet gross, he had done much to improve his natural advantages. His voice, rich, melodious, and strong, had been carefully trained on the amateur stage to express the nicest gradations of thought and feeling. His reason, vigorous and clear, had acquired at Oxford enough of the discipline of mathematics to become logical, and not enough to become narrow. His taste, formed by Eton scholarship and his own lifelong preference on the great classical writers, was enriched by an extensive and intimate acquaintance with French and Italian literature. His memory was singularly keen and retentive. Even Pitt could not more aptly point his arguments with the appropriate classical sentence, so dear to the man of education of those days, or turn the laugh against his adversary by a well-capped quotation. No one could ruffle the even serenity of his temper, few could resist the attractiveness of his address. Such was Charles James Fox at his entrance into political life in 1769. With all a young man's heedlessness of consequences, and love of excitement, with more than his share of generous instincts and ambitious aims natural to his time of life, he at once plunged impetuously into the fray, espoused without

thought the party of his father, took the House by storm by his first important speech, and soon pushed himself into the front rank of the most uncompromising defenders of the King and the Prerogative.

The champion was sorely needed. For nine years George III. had been working with stubborn pertinacity to effect the overthrow of the Whig oligarchy, which had for so long ruled England in the name of the King. The attempt at first sight seemed hopeless enough. What could a young man of narrow intellect and limited experience do against a party, bound together by every tie of political tradition and family connection, and resting securely on a basis of scientific parliamentary organization? What could even a king do, whom all the world believed to be a tool in the hands of a profligate mother and her unprincipled favourite, against a statesman who had just added two continents to the dominions of the British Crown, and was the greatest orator England had known since the days of Pym?

But George III. was not the man to be dazzled by the glory of a career even like that of Chatham. He had the perseverance and the courage of a typical John Bull. Curiously unable to understand the motives or feelings of others, he looked upon all those who disagreed with him or thwarted him as personal enemies. His mind, limited but tenacious, was singularly alive to his own interests. His pluck, largely compounded of pride and of obstinacy, forbade him to know when he was beaten. But over these lower qualities ruled with absolute sway a conscience which, if always narrow and often ignorant, was at any rate true and sincere. Honesty of purpose is the distinguishing characteristic of George III. It is easy to point out the deficiencies of a character which, from a high sense of moral duty, soiled itself in shameless

and conspicuous corruption. It is easy to sneer at a conscience which, on principle, excluded from its trust a Chatham and a Rockingham, and folded to its breast Sir Francis Dashwood and Lord Sandwich. It is easy to say that consistency in politics is a virtue often closely allied with stupidity and prejudice. To such criticisms George III. must fairly plead guilty. Stupid, prejudiced, and narrow, he was utterly unable to rise either in moral or intellectual conception above the opinions of his age, but he never deliberately sank below them. He did honestly and fearlessly what he conceived to be right, and never once did, in the course of one of the longest political lives known to English history, what he knew to be wrong. There are not many statesmen of the eighteenth century of whom the same can be said.

To George III. the Whig oligarchy was a tyrant which was slowly crushing the life out of the constitution. Chatham was an all-powerful dictator who overshadowed the legitimate influence of the Crown. As long as the two were united, the liberties of Englishmen and the rights of the Crown were alike at stake. There was something to be said for this view. With the passing away of all chance of a Stewart restoration, had passed away the necessity for Whig ascendency. There was no longer any reason why half the nation, and possibly the larger half, should be denied all opportunity of serving a dynasty to which it was thoroughly loyal. At the same time the principles which had been inscribed on the Whig banner of 1688, and which had been entrusted as a sacred deposit of political truth to the loving care of the great Revolution families, had been carried into effect. Civil and religious liberty in the Whig sense of the words had, under the governments of Stanhope and of Walpole, ceased to form the programme of a party, and had

become the common heritage of all Englishmen. Not even the most ardent of Tories seriously proposed to revive the Schism Act, or disputed the right of the nation to settle the succession to the Crown. The questions at issue between statesmen were of a much narrower kind. Whether the King should have the determining voice in the choice of his advisers and in the direction of affairs, was the crucial question of the day; and to take the side of George III. on such a subject was at least as much open to the Whig who revered the memory of William III., as to the Tory who observed the death day of King Charles the Martyr.

And if the divisions which had once divided parties had become obsolete, the new divisions which had taken their place had become unreal. They were personal not political, and represented cliques not principles. Walpole, in order to assure his own power, and to establish the Hanoverian dynasty upon the throne, had raised corruption to the dignity of a science. The Ministerial majority, nominated for the most part by a few Whig borough-owners, was kept together by an elaborate system of places and pensions. It was idle to say that a House of Commons so returned represented the nation. It represented the great Whig families, the Pelhams, the Cavendishes, the Bentincks and the Russells, and it represented the great Whig families alone. When on the fall of Walpole they assumed the reins of government, they used their power to further the interests of their connection. To a prescient statesman at the death of George II. England might well have seemed already a Venice of the North, slowly sinking under the deadening rule of a selfish and suspicious oligarchy of noble families.

From such a danger England was saved by George III.

He saw clearly enough that the weakness of the great families lay in their mutual jealousies, and he set himself to sow dissensions between them. The haughty independence of Chatham, the mystery in which he loved to conceal his real thoughts, and his evident determination never to bend his neck to the yoke of party, rendered it a comparatively easy task to separate his interests from those of Newcastle, who was a party leader and nothing more. The weapon of corruption, which had proved so effective in the hands of Walpole against the Tories, was wielded with still more telling effect by the King and Bute against the Whigs. Unexpected success attended their efforts. The Russells, ever greedy of place, and already at enmity with the Pelhams, drew nearer to the King. The Grenvilles separated from Newcastle, though not wholly from Chatham. The unpopularity of a fresh war brought about the resignation of the great Minister in 1761. Shelburne, soft, oily, and unscrupulous, placed his admitted talents at the disposal of the Crown. Henry Fox, ever venal and ever shameless, undertook the congenial task of managing the bribery department, and the ratification of the Peace of Paris by Parliament in 1763 won for Lord Holland his tainted peerage, and for the King his first great triumph over the Whig families.

But the emancipation of the Crown was by no means completed by the substitution of Bute and Fox for Chatham and Newcastle. Seven more weary years of plot and counterplot were to pass away before the King could obtain a Minister after his own heart. Bute soon quailed before a storm of unpopularity and calumny, such as had not assailed an English Minister since the time of Strafford, and George III., thrown back upon the discontented Whigs, found the scorpions of Grenville and of Bedford worse than the whips of Chatham. Restlessly he

turned from party to party, from leader to leader, from clique to clique, in the vain hope of freedom. To save himself from the thraldom of Grenville's tedious and insolent harangues, he surrendered at discretion to Rockingham and the Whig oligarchy. To escape from them he put himself in the hands of Chatham and his personal Ministry. In the chaos which resulted from the retirement of the dictator owing to his strange attacks of nervous prostration, the weary King lent his support by turns to Grafton or to Shelburne or to North as occasion seemed to offer. Yet through all this apparently aimless shifting to and fro he had never lost sight of his main object. With dogged pertinacity he had gone on steadily building up his own party. Every change of Ministry served to divide further the discordant sections of the once formidable Whig phalanx. Every session increased the numbers of the King's friends. Every act of patronage was dictated by a single eye to his political advantage. In the great questions which had arisen, especially those relating to Wilkes and to the American Colonies, he probably had with him the majority of the nation as well as the majority of Parliament. At last in 1770 came the opportunity he had been waiting for so long and so patiently. The reappearance of Chatham in Parliament finally broke up the Administration which still nominally owned the rule of Grafton. But neither Chatham, nor Bedford, nor Rockingham, were strong enough by themselves to claim the seals of office. Mutual jealousies were too rife to admit of a coalition, and so amid the divided ranks of his enemies George marched safely to victory. In Lord North he found a servant able and trustworthy, in the House of Commons a majority of placemen and pensioners obsequious and contented. The threads of policy were in his own hands, patronage

entirely under his own control. For the first time since his accession he felt himself to be in fact as well as in name a King.

It was at this crisis that Charles Fox entered Parliament, and it was quickly seen that he could bring to the King's side just what it most wanted. To gain his victory over the Whigs, George had been obliged to oppose himself to the intellect as well as to the morality of the country. By far the ablest statesman, and the most commanding figure in English political life, was Chatham, and Chatham was now in stern opposition. By far the most respected leader in the House of Lords was the praiseworthy and honest Rockingham, the acknowledged chief of the Whig families, and to counteract the reputation of Rockingham and withstand the thunder of Chatham's eloquence, the Court could only oppose the degraded character of Sandwich and the silver tongue of Mansfield. In the House of Commons things were even worse, for Lord North, clever and amiable as he was, had nothing but a shrewd mother wit to enable him to parry the attacks of Burke's impassioned declamation. A young orator, cool, self-possessed, logical, incisive, and cultured, was a godsend to a party which had to rely upon the venal advocacy of Norton and Wedderburn. Nor was Fox backward in taking advantage of his opportunity. Political cowardice was never one of his failings. He threw himself manfully into the breach, boldly defended the supersession of Wilkes against Burke, supported the committal of Lord Mayor Crosby, forced Lord North to vote with him against his will for the committal of the printer Woodfall, was appointed one of the Junior Lords of the Admiralty, and afterwards one of the Commissioners of the Treasury, and was soon looked upon on both sides of the House as among the most

able, and most unprincipled, of the bodyguard of the King.

It is impossible to credit Fox at this period of his career with any settled political convictions. Though he was a man in education and in knowledge of society, he was still a boy in judgment and in the enjoyment of life. He had not as yet thought or felt deeply on any question. Life was exceedingly pleasant to him, and in the gayness of his epicurean nature he threw himself with zest into every pleasure it afforded. Among those pleasures politics was by no means the least. It gave unique opportunities for cutting a figure in the world, and for paying off old scores. It enabled him to indulge in the malicious pleasure, so dear to the heart of the clever young politician, of shocking dull respectability by the vigour of his denunciation and the extravagance of his views. It provided him with a pleasant relief to the more absorbing business of Newmarket or Almack's. Careless of everything except the excitement of the moment, Fox plunged into politics and hit hard all round him with the same delightful sense of irresponsibility with which a modern undergraduate overthrows the Church and the Constitution at a debating society, and dances round a bonfire on the 5th of November.

His conduct with regard to the Marriage Laws is the typical exception which proves the rule. Among the many subjects which came before Parliament in the years 1769–1774, it was the only one about which he really cared, and the only one about which he showed independence. Lord Holland, when approaching middle age, had convulsed society in the days of the Pelhams by his runaway match with Lady Caroline Lennox, the daughter of the Duke of Richmond and great granddaughter of Charles II.; and the scandal occasioned by the marriage

had been among the reasons which led to the passing of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753. Naturally enough, Lord Holland had been the bitterest opponent of the measure in the House of Commons, and its passing was always regarded in the family as a condemnation of the marriage. Thus from childhood Charles Fox had been conversant with this particular subject, and had approached it from a private and family, rather than from a party, point of view, and, when he had acquired a sufficient experience in the House, he determined to press for its repeal.

But in 1772 the question of the Marriage Laws came before Parliament in an unexpected form. The marriage of the profligate Duke of Cumberland with Mrs. Horton, following as it did hard upon the secret marriage of the Duke of Gloucester with Lady Waldegrave, had filled the mind of the King with fears for the succession, and irritation at the insubordination shown by the royal family. He took the matter up with more than his usual alacrity, insisted upon the immediate preparation of a bill to deal with it, rejected a moderate scheme drafted by Thurlow and Wedderburn, and finally forced on the Cabinet a measure drawn by Lord Mansfield, by which all descendants of George II. were rendered incapable of contracting a valid marriage except with the consent of the Crown. Rumours of the proposal soon got wind and created general dissatisfaction, even among the stoutest henchmen of the Court. Fox at once declared his intention of opposing it. Wedderburn swore he would not support it. Hardly a man on the Ministerial side of the House could bring himself openly to defend it. Startled at this appearance of mutiny amongst his followers, and probably genuinely distrustful of the effect of opposition upon Fox, Lord North prevailed upon the

King and Mansfield to modify their bill in one important particular, and, as finally submitted to Parliament, the restriction of marriage only applied to members of the royal family under the age of twenty-six. The modification was useful to the wits. That a prince of the blood might take upon himself the cares of state at the age of eighteen, but those of matrimony not till he was twenty-six, was too good an opportunity to be lost, and the following epigram, said to be the work of Dowdeswell, was soon making the circuit of the coffee-houses :—

"Quoth Dick to Tom—This Act appears
Absurd as I'm alive:
To take the Crown at eighteen years,
The wife at twenty-five.
The mystery how shall we explain,
For sure as Dowdeswell said,
Thus early if they're fit to reign,
They must be fit to wed?
Quoth Tom to Dick—Thou art a fool,
And little knowest of life:
Alas! 'tis easier far to rule
A kingdom than a wife."

The change might produce an epigram, and keep together the Ministerial majority, but it could not prevent the secession of Fox. The fact was that he had begun already to realize his own importance, and to see that if he wanted to satisfy his ambition he must make others realize it as well as himself. The opportunity now presented itself of assuming a more independent position on a subject on which he was known to have strong personal convictions, and he hastened to seize it. On the 6th of January, 1772, he gave notice of a bill to repeal Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act. On the 20th of February he sent in his resignation as Junior Lord of the Admiralty, and wrote in explanation to Lord Ossory, his friend and connexion by marriage :—

"I should not have resigned at this moment merely on account of my complaint against Lord North, if I had not determined to vote against this Royal Family Bill, which in place I should be ashamed of doing."

When the bill reached the House of Commons, he spoke with studious courtesy of Lord North, but turned upon the lawyers—Sir Fletcher Norton, Thurlow, and Wedderburn—with great vigour, evidently relishing the task of pursuing his father's old enemies from subterfuge to subterfuge, till at last he fairly drove them into flat contradiction.

"Burke's wit, allusions, and enthusiasm," says Horace Walpole of the debate, "were striking, but not imposing; Wedderburn was a sharp, clever arguer though unequal; Charles Fox, much younger than either, was universally allowed to have seized the just point of an argument throughout with most amazing rapidity and clearness, and to have excelled even Charles Townshend as a parliament man, though inferior in wit and variety of talents."

The House of Commons readily understood, and the Ministerial majority readily forgave, Fox's independent attitude on the Royal Marriage Act. Unfortunately there was one who looked at the whole matter from a no less personal point of view than Fox, and who did not understand and never forgave. Writing to Lord North on the 26th of February, just after the bill had been introduced into the Commons, George III. had said: "It is not a question that immediately relates to administration, but personally to myself; therefore I have a right to expect a hearty support from every one in my service, and shall remember defaulters." Three days before he had put on record his opinion of Fox's recklessness. "I think Mr. C. Fox would have acted more becomingly towards you and himself if he had absented himself from the House, for his conduct cannot be attributed to con-

science, but to his aversion from all restraints." The extravagances of Fox's private life and the fopperies of his dress and manners were certain to be distasteful to the staid and business-like King, and to render him little disposed to make allowances for any political misconduct. The two had now become opposed to each other on a question in which the personal feelings of each were strongly stirred. The "registered edict," as Chatham finely called the Royal Marriage Act, had, it is true, been passed into law, and the King had triumphed; but Fox had been nevertheless in his eyes amongst the worst of the defaulters, and George had said that he would remember defaulters. Thus began the little rift which was soon to grow into so wide and impassable a gulf of separation between Fox and the King.

On the 7th of April Fox's bill for the repeal of Lord Hardwicke's Act came on for discussion. The day before Fox had been at Newmarket, losing heavily as usual on the turf. On his way back to town to introduce his first important measure into Parliament—a bill which was to alter the social arrangements of the country, and remove a stigma from his family—he fell in with some friends at Hocherel. Characteristically enough, he spent the night drinking with them instead of preparing for the struggle of the morrow, and arrived on the next day at the House without having been to bed at all, without having prepared his speech, and without even having drafted his bill. Nothing but the most consummate talent could have saved him. Unprepared with arguments of his own, he introduced his bill modestly and gracefully, and reserved his strength for his reply, when Lord North and Burke, who opposed him, should have given him the necessary materials. Horace Walpole thus describes the scene:—

"Charles Fox, who had been running about the House talking to different persons and scarcely listening to Burke, rose with amazing spirit and memory, answered both Lord North and Burke, ridiculed the arguments of the former and confuted those of the latter with a shrewdness that, from the multiplicity of reasons, as much exceeded his father in embracing all the arguments of his antagonist as he did in his manner and delivery. . . . This was genius, it was almost inspiration."

Genius it certainly was, but genius which was solely intent upon its own amusement and glorification. The bill was read a first time by a majority of one, in spite of Lord North's opposition. On the 19th of May it came on again for discussion; but its champion was not there. He hurried in from Newmarket in time to find his bill thrown out by a large majority without a debate.

Charles Fox remained out of office for the rest of the year, but did not join the Opposition, nor alter in the least his Tory views, except so far as they may have been insensibly altered by the conversation of Burke, with whom he now began that close and untiring friendship which was only shattered by the French Revolution. Lord North could not but feel the danger of leaving so brilliant a comet in the political horizon to follow his own erratic orbit, unregulated and uninfluenced by the sun of the Ministerial system; and in the last days of the year an arrangement was made—of course at the expense of the tax-payer—by which Fox took his place at the Treasury Board. But in office or out of office, his nature remained the same. Ten months of independence had only whetted his appetite. Responsibility sat very lightly on his shoulders, and he was no more likely to lose an opportunity for delighting the House with a piece of brilliant invective out of consideration for his party or his leaders, than he was to check his horse at a fence because he did not know what was on the other side. The more assured

grew his parliamentary position, the more hopeless became the state of his finances, the more determinedly he rebelled against the bridle of office, the more viciously he kicked over the traces.

He had been hardly two months at the Treasury Board when he acted as teller for Sir W. Meredith's motion against the imposition of a religious test on matriculation at the Universities, although a strong whip had been issued by the Government on the other side. In June of the same year he suddenly delivered a most violent philippic against Clive, although the House, at the instance of North, had only a month before come to a deliberate judgment on his conduct which amounted to a guarded acquittal, and Clive at that moment was the possessor of ten Government votes. In the February of 1774 came his final and unpardonable indiscretion. An attack had appeared in a paper called the *Public Advertiser*, upon the impartiality of the Speaker, Sir Fletcher Norton, who appealed to the House for an expression of its confidence. On this, the printer, Woodfall, was ordered to appear at the bar. On the 14th of February he attended, named the well-known ex-vicar of Brentford, generally known as Parson Horne, as the author, pleaded that this was his first offence, and asked for lenient treatment. Mollified by his submission, the House was about to commit him to the custody of the sergeant-at-arms, when Charles Fox jumped up and moved that he be committed to Newgate. Lord North, anxious to avoid another Wilkes case, nettled at the assumption of leadership by Fox, and not knowing of any precedent for committal to the sergeant-at-arms, moved to commit to the Gate House instead of Newgate, as that was out of the jurisdiction of the City. At this moment Dowdeswell produced the very precedent for

committal to the sergeant-at-arms which Lord North had desired, who then entreated Fox to release him from his pledge of supporting a committal to prison, since it was given under a misapprehension. Fox, self-willed and obstinate, refused, and forced his leader to the ignominious course of himself voting for a motion of which he disapproved, while he begged all his supporters to vote against him.

Conduct such as this from a subordinate official to the first Minister of the Crown was an insult which no party discipline, however lax, could endure. Yet for some days Lord North took no step, waiting perhaps for some expression of regret on the part of Fox. He little knew the man with whom he had to deal. So far from expressing regret, or caring at all what the King, or his colleagues, or indeed the world in general, might think of him, Fox was contemptuously accusing Lord North of pusillanimity at the clubs. In the following week he returned to the charge and openly attacked him in the House for what he considered his culpable lenity towards the printers. This was too much even for the patience of Lord North, and on the 24th of February his dismissal was notified to Fox in the following laconic terms: "His Majesty has thought proper to order a new Commission of the Treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name."

In four years and a quarter of parliamentary life Fox had been twice in and twice out of office. When he so wantonly left the Administration in 1774, he little thought that he had already seen more of official life than he was ever to see again, but so it was. Never again did he hold office for more than eight months at a time, and the total number of months which he spent in the service of the Crown, during the thirty-two years which remained

to him of life, when put together are only a little more than half of those which he spent in the Ministry of Lord North.

It has been sometimes said that Fox's behaviour to Lord North and his dismissal from office which followed, were due, not to petulance of temper or to vanity and self-assertion, but to a sense of moral superiority which would not permit him any longer to condone the evil with which he found himself involved; that it was a true moral instinct, which, working faithfully if blindly, led him to dissociate himself from a hireling crew of sycophants, and cast in his lot with Chatham and with Burke rather than with Sandwich or with Wedderburn. The facts will hardly warrant such a view. Fox quarrelled with Lord North, not because he was too much of a Tory, but because he was not Tory enough. He led against the Minister what in the parliamentary language of modern France would be called the extreme right. It was to the hireling crew, the placemen and the pensioners, that he appealed, to force his timid trimmer of a leader to support the dignity of the Crown and the privilege of Parliament against those who dared to print criticisms on their conduct. An honest indignation against parliamentary corruption, if felt, was certainly singularly well concealed by one who consistently opposed the only Act which was efficacious in promoting an impartial trial of election petitions.

The fact is that it is impossible to dissociate the public life of Fox from his private life at this period of his career. The one was a mirror of the other. Both were dominated by the same love of notoriety, were actuated by the same impulsive temperament, were clouded by the same reckless and cynical contempt for principle. It is true that at a later period of his career he acquired strong

convictions. The great questions brought to the front by the American War deepened and steadied his whole character. Intervals of office taught him something of responsibility. But conviction was with him a plant of slow growth, to act upon impulse instead of on principle was for him even to the end of his days the most congenial course, to mistake sentiment for principle the most unfailing snare. The King appreciated him at the time of his secession far more justly, if more severely, than a House which is ever indulgent to those who amuse it.

"I am greatly incensed," he wrote to Lord North after the division on Woodfall's case, "at the presumption of Charles Fox in obliging you to vote with him that night; indeed that young man has so thoroughly cast off every principle of common honour and honesty, that he must become as contemptible as he is odious."

Walpole, with more delicacy but no less severity, put the same truth in a letter to Sir Horace Mann:—

"The famous Charles Fox was this morning turned out of his place of Lord of the Treasury for great flippancies in the House towards North. His parts will now have a full opportunity of showing whether they can balance his character or whether patriotism can whitewash it."

His first essay in political life, tried by any standard except that of mere oratorical success, must be pronounced a failure. Coming into Parliament gifted with transcendent talents and enjoying unique opportunities, he had in five years become unpopular with the people, hated by the King, and distrusted by the House which petted and applauded him. And his failure was distinctly a moral failure, a failure of character and of character alone. In that age of meanness and moral degeneration there were plenty of statesmen who attained to honourable posts in the State whose private life would not bear examination. The Duke of Grafton could become Prime Minister, the high priests of the mysteries of Medmenham

could preside over the finances and over the navy of England, yet no one thought that Grafton, or Dashwood, or Sandwich should be debarred from the counsels of an English King because they were debauchees. Charles Fox was not so degraded a libertine as Sandwich. He was not so confirmed a drunkard as Carteret or as Dundas. Even as a gamester he was no worse than his friend Carlisle, though he might be more unlucky. What then was it that singled out Fox as the one statesman of the eighteenth century who must retrieve his character before he could be trusted, in whose case alone moral failure was to be a bar to political advancement?

The answer to the question is to be found in the fact that Charles Fox's faults were faults of character, not of passion—faults which vitiated his whole life, and not merely one department of it. A man might be a libertine or a drunkard, but, when free from his particular temptation, might have as cool a judgment and as far-seeing an eye as the most blameless of politicians. But no one can play fast and loose with men and parties, can treat measures as dice to be shuffled about for his own advantage, and refuse to be bound by the ties of party discipline, without showing that he is bringing the spirit of a gambler into the counsels of the nation, and playing with the honour and welfare of the country as stakes in the game of his own ambition. And those who attentively studied Charles Fox in his youth saw how impossible it was to trust him in any matter of importance. His leading characteristic was exaggeration, which sprung partly from inordinate animal spirits and partly from overweening vanity. He was always in extremes. All that he did was over-done. As a macaroni he was over dressed. On the turf he had more bad horses in training and backed them for higher sums than any one else. As a

man of fashion he would sit up all night over the bottle and hold his own in the morning against any one in the House or on the racecourse. When at Oxford he walked fifty-six miles in a day ; during a tour in Ireland he swam twice round the Devil's Punchbowl at Killarney. In the House his invective was so unmeasured as to defeat its own object. Men were amused at his insolence, charmed with his dash, but not convinced by his argument. His idleness was fully equal to his recklessness; many of his speeches even on the most important subjects were delivered without previous thought, and his opinions decided by his personal dislikes. At Brookes's no name appeared so frequently in the betting-book, no one played so high or lost so carelessly at the gaming table. It was the excitement of the game that captivated him, not the desire to win. The largeness of the stake merely added to the excitement, and, with a true gambler's instinct, he cared not a button whether he lost or won provided he had enough to stake on the next round. The characteristic way in which he prepared himself for making his first appearance in Parliament as the champion of religious liberty is thus described by Horace Walpole :—

"He did not shine in the debate, nor could it be wondered at. He had sat up playing hazard at Almack's from Tuesday evening, 4th, till five in the afternoon of Wednesday, 5th. An hour before he had recovered £12,000 that he had lost, and by dinner, which was at five o'clock, he had ended losing £11,000. On the Thursday he spoke in this debate ; went to dinner at past eleven at night ; from thence to White's, where he drank till seven the next morning ; thence to Almack's, where he won £6000, and between three and four in the afternoon he set out for Newmarket. His brother Stephen lost £11,000 two nights after, and Charles £10,000 more on the 13th; so that in three nights the two brothers, the eldest not yet twenty-five, lost £32,000."

Charles Fox complained of the quiet of the session, and said the House of Commons was always up before he was. Well might Selwyn congratulate the landlord

of the lodgings where the two Foxes lived, on keeping in his house the finest pickles in London.

He was a willing victim to the aristocratic sharpers who filled the saloons of Paris and of London in the early days of George III. The harpy crew of ladies, in whose degraded minds avarice took the form of gambling, found in him a perfect El Dorado—a gold mine always ready to yield its treasures without ever demanding them back. He knew that he was cheated, but he would rather lose his money than his game.

> "At Almack's of pigeons I am told there are flocks,
> But it is thought the completest is one Mr. Fox;
> If he touches a card, if he rattles a box,
> Away fly the guineas of this Mr. Fox.
> In gaming 'tis said he's the stoutest of cocks,
> No man can play deeper than this Mr. Fox."

During the three years which elapsed before the outbreak of the American War the passion for gaming was at its height. Fox himself said he had known as much as £70,000 lost in one night. There was hardly an elder son among the men of fashion who had not parted with his reversion to the Jews to obtain money with which to gamble. Friends like Lord March and George Selwyn put all they had into a common bank, and each stood surety for the losses of the other. Lord Carlisle alone had at one time lent Charles Fox as much as £17,000, and each morning, while the profligate was in bed, his Jerusalem chamber, as he wittily called his waiting-room, was thronged by the money-lenders anxious to suck yet deeper into the fruits of Lord Holland's corruption. Society, determined not to treat him seriously either as a politician or a man of pleasure, looked on with a smile, half of pity, half of contempt, as

the debts rolled up, and speculated when the crisis would come. It came in 1774, soon after his quarrel with Lord North. The birth of a son to his elder brother added a good life to the one bad one which stood between him and Lord Holland's fortune. The boy was born, said Charles Fox profanely, like a second Messiah, for the destruction of the Jews. He was mistaken. At once those worthies, hitherto so long-suffering, began to show their teeth. His father came nobly to the rescue, and of the untold wealth which in the days of his political power Lord Holland had filched from his country, no less than £140,000 went at one blow to preserve his son from bankruptcy and ruin.

How was it possible for the little aristocratic world which held the reins of power in the time of George III. to distinguish between the gamester of St. Stephen's and the gamester at Brookes's? In every department of life they saw in Charles Fox the same qualities. Profligacy, vanity, and extravagance inspired his speeches and marked his actions both private and public. His friends knew that behind the love of notoriety which prompted his worst excesses was to be found a clear head and a warm and unselfish heart,, untiring patience and a sunny temper, and could look forward to the time when the energy and self-assertion, which now spent itself on political and social extravagance, would be concentrated and disciplined by a cause worthy to enlist alike his heart and his judgment in its service. But the world which knew him partly, and the world which knew him not at all, could not be expected to look below the surface for qualities which he had hitherto carefully concealed. To most men he was still the chip of the old block, the unscrupulous son of an unscrupulous father, the political as well as the social libertine. There is no mistaking

the venomous hatred which assailed him on all sides, and found expression in verses such as these:—

> "Welcome hereditary worth,
> No doubt, no blush belies thy birth,
> Prone as the infernal fiends to evil;
> If that black face and that black heart
> Be not old Holland's counterpart
> Holland himself's unlike the devil."

CHAPTER II.

THE AMERICAN WAR.

1774–1777.

It was fortunate for Charles Fox that his quarrel with the Court party, the crisis in his own financial position, and the climax of the American difficulties, all came in the same year. Forced by insolvency into some measure of respectability, completely independent of all past political ties, he found ready made to his hand a cause important enough to demand the full exercise of all his talents, and honest enough to give him an opportunity of retrieving his character. It is not often that a young politician who leaves his party from petulance and wrongheadedness can so soon hide his faults under the ægis of liberty and justice. When Fox quarrelled with Lord North it was certain that the chief motive of his conduct in the immediate future would be hatred of the man whom he had wronged. His early speeches on the American question show that he took it up, as he had before taken up the case of Wilkes, because it was obviously the next move in the political game. He espoused the cause of the Colonies because Lord North led the battle against them. But, fortunately for him and his country, in the new policy which he adopted

Burke was at his side to prompt, and Chatham before him to lead. The more he studied the question, and the more he fought the question, the more his warm heart and clear mind were touched by the principles at stake. He saw that, below the legal questions of the nature and the extent of the power to tax the Colonies, lay far more important principles of right and wrong; and before the year of his defection was over the Tory champion of the prerogative, who had wantonly trampled upon the liberty of the press, had become the Whig champion of the right of resistance, and the denouncer of arbitrary rule.

The year 1774 was the critical year of the American struggle. On the policy adopted by the Home Government, and especially on the means chosen by which to carry out that policy, depended the action of the vast majority of American citizens—men who were attached to the Crown, did not desire independence, and hated fanaticism, but who would unhesitatingly prefer their liberty to their loyalty, if loyalty meant submission to what they believed to be unjust. In England the whole question was wofully misunderstood, and the jealousies of English parties made it impossible to unravel the knot. Chatham and Burke agreed that England must render justice before she could demand obedience. As long ago as the debates upon the repeal of the Stamp Act Chatham had boldly exclaimed, "I rejoice that America has resisted. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest;" but neither Burke nor Chatham were quite agreed as to what justice really meant, and the latter declared in a letter to a correspondent, in 1774:—

"If I could persuade myself that the Americans entertained the most distant intentions of throwing off the legislative supremacy and

great constitutional superintending power and control of the British Legislature, I would be the very first person to enforce that power by every exertion the country was capable of making."

The clergy and the landowners did not look deeper into the matter than to notice that the colonists were for the most part Dissenters, and were in declared opposition to the King. The commercial classes, following as usual their pecuniary interests, were for or against the Americans, according as their particular trades were affected by the dispute.

Even in the Ministry itself opinion was much divided. Mansfield and the lawyers were all for the assertion of legal right, and the punishment of those who ventured to disobey the law. The Duke of Grafton and Lord Dartmouth led a smaller section who wished for conciliation. Lord North, indolent and amiable, shrank from pushing matters to an extreme, and yet shrank more from offending the King. So he allowed England to drift aimlessly into a war, which, begun by misunderstanding, was carried on with incapacity, and ended in disgrace. There were two courses, and two courses only, open for the Ministry to adopt, and even as late as 1774 either of them, if pursued with sufficient vigour, might have been successful. The one was the policy of Burke, a full and frank repudiation of England's claim to raise a revenue from America, and a generous recognition of the capacity of the Colonies to a large share of self-government. The other was the policy of the King, a prompt and swift suppression of all opposition by irresistible force. Lord North adopted neither the one nor the other, but a mixture of both. By slow and hesitating threats without the power to punish, by weak efforts to punish when punishment had become not deterrent, but exasperating, he made conciliation and repression alike impossible.

Half-hearted coercion, ill-conceived and feebly executed, cannot but stand self-condemned.

During the year 1774, Fox was undergoing a course of political education. His quarrel with Lord North by no means meant that he had become a Whig. But gradually the change came over him which has been common enough in later political history, and the man who separated from his party leader for personal reasons soon adopted the principles of his political opponents. With Fox the change was probably far more sincere than it usually is. He had been a Tory in politics without ever having been a Tory by conviction. His quarrel with Lord North and the King freed him from party ties and put him in opposition to the Tory Minister. The proposals of the Government to close the harbour of Boston, to alter the constitution of Massachusetts by Act of Parliament, and to try Massachusetts prisoners in other colonies, or possibly even in England, were sufficiently startling to make even the most careless of politicians look well to his compass before he cast himself loose from his moorings in so stormy a sea. Against the Boston Port Bill, on March 23, 1774, Fox merely objected that it gave too much power into the hands of the Crown. A month later, when the Massachusetts Charter Bill was before the House, he denounced the attempt to tax the colonists without their consent, and urged the House to pause before it passed a bill of pains and penalties which began with a crime and ended with a punishment, and to consider whether it was not more proper to govern by military force or by management? Just before this speech he had given his first vote with the Whig party in favour of repealing the duty on tea. Burke, whose great speech on American Taxation was delivered on this occasion, had during the session become his political instructor. In

July, the death of Lord Holland severed the last tie which bound him to the Court, and in the October of the same year, in a private letter to Burke, he avows himself not merely a Whig, but a devoted follower and adviser of Lord Rockingham. Referring to some success achieved by General Gage's soldiers over the Boston mob, he says:—

"What a dismal piece of news! I do not know that I was ever so affected with any public event either in history or in life. The introduction of great standing armies into Europe has there made all mankind irrevocably slaves, but to complain is useless, and I cannot bear to give the Tories the triumph of seeing how dejected I am at heart. I have written to Lord Rockingham to desire him to lose no time in adopting some plan of operations in consequence of this event I am clear that a secession is now totally unadvisable; and that nothing but some very firm and vigorous step will be at all becoming; whether that or anything else can be useful I am sure I do not know."

For the next nine years English politics were wholly dominated by the American War. Its first direct result was to divide parties at last upon an intelligible basis. The war was acknowledged to be the King's war. Lord North was well known to be half-hearted from the first, but obedient. The King became a party leader, the Minister was seen to be but his servant, the party became the King's party, the policy the King's policy, and its failure the King's defeat. Parties became necessarily divided into the party for the King and the party against him. All the better part of Fox's nature impelled him to enlist himself on the side against the King. He learned from Burke to dread and to detest royal influence in politics. He believed with Chatham in the essential injustice of the English claim to tax the colonists. His logical mind grasped with ease the key of the situation. Whether the claims of England were technically legal or illegal mattered but little. An attempt to coerce the colonists could not but drive them to assert their

independence. The assertion of independence could not but enlist all Europe on their side. How could England stand up single-handed against the world? What sort of relations could she establish, even if she was successful, with a colony which she had conquered with the sword? In his speech on the Address delivered at the beginning of the session of 1776 he put this with his accustomed force:—

"We have been told that it is not for the interest of Spain and France to have America independent. Sir, I deny it, and say it is contrary to every principle of common sense. Is not the division of the enemy's power advantageous? Is not a free country engaged in trade less formidable than the ambition of an old corrupted government, their only formidable rival in Europe? The noble lord who moved the amendment said that we were in the dilemma of conquering or abandoning America: if we are reduced to that, I am for abandoning America. What have been the advantages of America to the kingdom? Extent of trade, increase of commercial advantages, and a numerous people growing up in the same ideas and sentiments as ourselves. Now, sir, would those advantages accrue to us if America was conquered? Not one of them. Such a possession of America must be secured by a standing army; and that, let me observe, must be a very considerable army. Consider, sir, that that army must be cut off from the intercourse of social liberty here, and accustomed, in every instance, to bow down and break the spirits of men, to trample on the rights, and to live on the spoils cruelly wrung from the sweat and labour of their fellow-subjects; such an army employed for such purposes, and paid by such means, for supporting such principles, would be a very proper instrument to effect points of a greater, or at least more favourite, importance nearer home; points perhaps very unfavourable to the liberties of this country."

As the years went on, events proved that Fox was in the right and George III. in the wrong. The half-heartedness and ignorance of the Ministers combined with the incapacity of the generals to render conspicuous the failure of the war. Nation after nation joined in the hue and cry against England in the hour of her necessity, as jays chatter and peck round a stricken eagle. The

storm-cloud settled lower and lower upon the head of the brave and patient King as he fought blindly and uselessly on in sheer despair. The more hopeless became the struggle, the more men turned in anxious expectation of relief to the faithful few, who had kept unstained from the first the banner of opposition to the Crown. The rights of nations, and opposition to prerogative government, became the watchwords of the Whigs as they reformed themselves under Fox and Burke out of the chaos of existing parties during the American War. In the enunciation of these principles Fox found the means to obliterate from men's memories the records of his older self, and stood forward in the eyes of his countrymen, no longer the political gambler and the insolvent rhetorician, but the trusted leader of the younger Whigs, and the acknowledged champion of Whig principles.

Yet the attentive observer of the public utterances of Fox during the famous Parliament of 1774 will look in vain for any signs of that political insight which is the highest, as it is the rarest, gift of statesmanship. His contemporaries used to say that Fox was at his best during the American War, that he never surpassed the speeches he made on that subject; but this is really but another way of saying that Fox excelled in the power and rush of his invective. No politician whose strength lay in the destructive force of his attack could wish for a better opportunity for the exercise of his particular talent than that afforded by a hateful and disastrous civil war, in which every step was a blunder weakly adopted by a reluctant Minister, and carried by a mechanical majority. During the six years of the War Parliament Fox never threw away an opportunity. Night after night he exposed with pitiless vehemence the folly of

the Ministers and the hopelessness of their policy. Again and again he turned upon Lord North and Lord George Germaine with a fierceness of personal attack which was almost too strong for the nerves of that not over-squeamish assembly. Negligence, incapacity, inconsistency, unexampled treachery and falsehood, are flowers of invective culled from a single speech directed in 1775 against the former. In December, 1777, he turned upon the latter:—

"For the two years that the noble lord has presided over American affairs, the most violent scalping tomahawk measures have been pursued; bleeding has been his only prescription. 'If a people deprived of their ancient rights are grown tumultuous, bleed them; if they are attacked by a spirit of insurrection, bleed them; if their fever should rise into rebellion, bleed them,' cries the State physician; 'more blood, more blood, still more blood!'"

In April, 1779, he moved for the removal of Lord Sandwich from the office of First Commissioner of the Admiralty. In June, stung by an accusation thrown out in the debate on the bill for doubling the militia, that he had allied himself with the Ministers, he burst out into a torrent of passion afterwards often remembered against him.

"What, enter into an alliance with those very Ministers who have betrayed their country, who have prostituted the public strength, who have prostituted the public wealth, who have prostituted what is still more valuable, the glory of the nation? The idea is too monstrous to be admitted for a moment. Gentlemen must have foregone their principles, and have given up their honour before they could have approached the threshold of an alliance so abominable, so scandalous, and so disgraceful. Does the noble lord think it possible that I can ally myself with those Ministers who have led us on from one degree of wretchedness to another, till at length they have brought us to the extreme moment of peril—the extreme verge of destruction? Ally myself with those Ministers who have lost America, ruined Ireland, thrown Scotland into tumult, and put the very existence of Great Britain to the hazard? Ally myself with those Ministers who have, as they now confess, foreseen the Spanish war, the fatal mischief which goads us to destruction, and yet have from time to time told Parlia-

ment that a Spanish war is not to be feared? . . . To ally myself with men capable of such conduct would be to ally myself to disgrace and ruin. I beg therefore, for myself and my friends, to disclaim any such alliance, and I am the rather inclined to disavow such a connection, because from the past conduct of Ministers I am warranted to declare and to maintain that such an alliance would be something worse than an alliance with France and Spain—it would be an alliance with those who pretend to be the friends of Great Britain, but are in fact and in truth her worst enemies."

He read again the philippics of Demosthenes to perfect himself in the arts of vindictive declamation. He was the most effective and popular of the Opposition speakers. The whisper that Charles Fox was on his legs would fill the House in a moment. The rich sweep of his passion, the quick thrust of his retort, the sharp edge of his sarcasm, afforded to every member of the House a keen intellectual pleasure, for Fox was never dull and never involved. His arguments were intelligible to the meanest understanding, his excitement was catching to those moulded in the dullest clay, and the House, which, when his speech was over, was going to outvote him by an enormous majority, roared with applause as each shaft sped home to its mark.

Yet in all the flood of eloquence which Fox poured forth in this Parliament, there is singularly little which could at all help to put an end to the evils of which he complained. His speeches must be searched through and through before anything can be found which shows a deeper appreciation of the dangers and the difficulties of the situation, than that the blunders of Ministers are the opportunity of the Opposition. He had to deal with a Parliament which was actuated mainly by a mistaken view of what the dignity of the mother country required, with a nation which was exceedingly ignorant of the thoughts and policy of the colonists. As is usually the

case, it was ignorance, not malevolence, which was hurrying England along the path of destruction, it was pride which prevented her leaders from acknowledging it. The business of a great statesman in the years 1774 and 1775 and 1776 was to convince all thinking men that it is wise and courageous sometimes to eat humble pie; to show from the acts and recorded words of the colonists themselves that they were being driven to independence, not rushing to seek it; to renounce wholly and frankly the old theory that colonies exist to provide markets for the trade of the mother country; and to prove that the true wisdom of England would be found in promoting and not retarding the development of colonial self-government. It is possible that such a policy would have had no chance of success, but, with the great names of Chatham and of Camden, of Burke and of Fox, as its sponsors, it would at any rate have guaranteed that the case of the Americans was put fairly before the people of England, and that judgment was not merely going by default.

Among English statesmen Burke was the only one who saw that it was necessary to oppose some rival political principle to the obvious one of maintaining the legal rights of England over her colonies, but unfortunately Burke had not the ear of the House of Commons or of the country. In his great speech on conciliation with America, delivered on March 22nd, 1775, he laid down, in words which will live as long as the Empire of England has any power over men's minds, the principles on which alone it can hold together:—

"My idea is therefore, without considering whether we yield as matter of right or grant as matter of favour, to admit the people of our colonies into an interest in the constitution. . . . My hold of the colonies is in the close affection which grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges and equal protection. These are

ties which, though light as air, are strong as links of iron. Let the colonies always keep the idea of their civil rights associated with your government, they will cling and grapple to you; and no force under heaven will be of power to tear them from their allegiance. But let it be once understood that your government may be one thing and their privileges another, the cement is gone, the cohesion is loosened, and everything hastens to decay and dissolution. As long as you have the wisdom to keep the sovereign authority of this country as the sanctuary of liberty, the sacred temple consecrated to our common faith, wherever the chosen race and sons of England worship freedom they will turn their faces towards you. Deny them this participation of freedom, and you break that sole bond which originally made and still must preserve the unity of the empire. Do not entertain so weak an imagination, as that your registers and your bonds, your affidavits and your sufferances, your cockets and your clearances, are what form the great security of your commerce. Do not dream that your letters of office and your instructions and your spending clauses are the things that hold together this great contexture of this mysterious whole. These things do not make your government. Dead instruments, passive tools as they are, it is the spirit of the English communion that gives all their life and efficacy to them; it is the spirit of the English constitution which, infused through the mighty mass, pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates, and vivifies every part of the empire even down to the minutest member."

To turn from these noble words, pregnant with deep political wisdom, to the personalities of Fox, is to come forth from a great symphony into the midst of a vulgar street brawl. Yet Fox was probably right in not attempting higher work than that of the dashing cavalry officer. The Rupert of debate, he could lead a charge and win a victory, but not as yet determine a policy or plan a campaign. To open the eyes of England to the vast issues which lay hid under the narrow legal limits of the American question, required the moral earnestness as well as the political imagination of a Chatham or a Burke, and moral earnestness to be anything but hypocrisy must be based on moral conviction. The time had not yet come when Fox could lay claim to that. True he could lament, like Mirabeau, of the errors of his youth, but, like Mirabeau,

he could not put them away. Though not the gambler that he had been before the crisis of 1774, Newmarket and Almack's still took up most of the time which was not devoted to Parliament. "He had abandoned," says Walpole of him in 1776, "neither his gaming nor his rakish life, and was seldom in bed before five in the morning, nor out of it before two at noon." It was in the following year that he visited Paris and made such an unfavourable impression upon Madame du Deffand. It was not therefore surprising that men of fashion and politicians refused to believe in the sincerity of his new convictions, though they were quite ready to acknowledge the increased power of his oratory. Even a political opponent like Lord North so little believed him to be serious as to congratulate him after one of his most scathing denunciations of Lord George Germaine, in the very hearing of his victim, with a joke. "Charles, I am glad you did not fall on me to-day, for you was in full feather."

CHAPTER III.

THE FALL OF LORD NORTH.

1777–1782.

THE surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga on the 17th of October, 1777, put an end to the possibility of the reduction of America by force of arms. The alliance with France which followed hard upon it secured her independence. Englishmen, under the leadership of the single-minded King and his venal followers, had set about the coercion of thirteen colonies with as light a heart as they would order out the military to suppress a street riot. From the first they persisted in attributing the resistance which they met with to a few disloyal lawyers and politicians who were bent on independence. They would not believe that they had to deal with a nation determined to maintain its liberties. They did not realize how difficult it was to coerce into submission a country between whose shores and their own flowed three thousand miles of ocean. That terrible ocean they thought could be bridged if it could not be drained, and America had no fleet with which to dispute with England for the supremacy of the sea. They never stopped to think what the result of their victory was to be. They might indeed, with the help of German mercenaries and Indian savages,

crush the hasty levies of Washington in the field, but that was merely the beginning of difficulties. It was hard enough, as every English statesman knew, to hold Ireland down with all the help which a powerful English garrison of landowners, the long tradition of Protestant ascendency, and eighty years of the grossest legal tyranny could give. Was it conceivable that a united America, the children of Smith, and of Winthrop, and of Penn, would ever submit to be the slaves of a penal code? Was it reasonable to expect that an army of twelve, or of twenty, or of fifty thousand men could thus hold down by force a growing and vigorous nationality three thousand miles away? Force, as Burke pointed out, is not the only nor the truest sanction of government. Besides the appeal to physical force there must always be the appeal to moral right; justice must go hand in hand with power, if peace is to be the result. The case for the Ministry depended wholly upon two assumptions—that it was not the nation, but a factious minority, which had taken up arms against its sovereign, and that the military and naval superiority of England was so great, that the geographical difficulties in the way of conquest could be overcome. The events of the first two years of the war showed that both assumptions were erroneous. The assembling of the Congress, and the Declaration of Independence, proved the union of the Colonies. The surrender of Saratoga showed that in America colonists and loyalists could fight, to say the least, on equal terms. The treaty with France put in daily jeopardy the command of the sea, which was essential to the carrying on of hostilities by England at all.

Lord North saw the abyss which was opening before him. In February, 1778, he carried through Parliament proposals for conciliation, which would have been welcomed in America in 1774, and which were substantially the

same as those proposed by Burke in 1775. Secret communications were opened with Franklin in Paris, but Franklin replied that it was now too late. The public avowal of the treaty between France and America a few days afterwards more than justified his words. To be too late is the attribute of all incompetent Ministers. In 1778 Lord North proposed too late terms which would have been accepted in 1775. In 1782 the King had to agree to the independence which he had refused to consider in 1778. From the date of the treaty with France it was clear that America would accept no terms short of independence, and it was equally clear that England could not force other terms upon her, as long as France supplied her with money. After the death of Chatham in May, 1778, it became a settled principle with the Opposition that the acknowledgment of American independence was a measure absolutely inevitable, and therefore wise. Though no definite motion was made by Fox by way of pledging the House to this policy, the main gist of all his speeches on the American question, delivered subsequently to 1778, was to show the impossibility of conquering America, and the absolute necessity of making peace. Once in 1779, and twice in 1781, he urged this directly with all his powers upon Parliament, and as it was universally admitted that peace at that time could only be obtained by the grant of independence, there could be no doubt as to which way his opinion pointed. In 1781 he said as much openly:—

"As to the mere single proposition whether America might with propriety be declared independent, abstracted from other considerations, it is perfectly ridiculous to debate about it in the House this evening. America, as the right honourable gentleman has confessed, is already independent, and, as he well observed from one point of view, ought to be considered as a public enemy. I most heartily agree with the right honourable gentleman that she is independent; I may possibly disagree

with him when I affirm again that she will and must be independent . . . . and this I am in my own mind authorized to say, were it not that conciliatory healing and friendly negotiation may effect much in preventing the bad consequences which a vote declaring America independent might be productive of hereafter, I should, instead of making the motion I have done, directly have moved that the American States be declared independent."

Burke had enunciated the same truths as early as December, 1778 :—

"With regard to avowing the independency of America, gentlemen looked at the position in a wrong point of view, and talked of it merely as a matter of choice, when, in fact, it was now become a matter of necessity. It is in this latter light only that I regard it, in the latter light only that I maintain that it is incumbent on Great Britain to acknowledge it directly. On the day I first heard of the American States having claimed independency it made me sick at heart; it struck me to the soul, because I saw it was a claim essentially injurious to this country, and a claim which Great Britain can never get rid of—never! never! never! It is not therefore to be thought that I wish for the independency of America. Far from it. I feel it as a circumstance exceedingly detrimental to the fame, and exceedingly detrimental to the interest of this country. But when by a wrong management of the cards a gamester has lost much, it is right for him to make the most of the game as it then stands, and to take care that he does not lose more. This is our case at present; the stake already gone is material, but the very existence of our empire is more, and we are now madly putting that to the risk."

The Duke of Richmond, with characteristic impetuosity, had made up his mind as early as 1776 that the grant of independence was the only way of preventing serious national disaster, and had said as much in the House of Lords in 1778. Rockingham, careful and taciturn, was understood to have accepted the inevitable after the campaign of Saratoga. During the latter years of the war Shelburne remained the only Whig politician of any note, who, true to the memory of Lord Chatham, could not bear openly to look facts in the face.

In the nation a similar change was slowly winning its way owing to the stern logic of events. At the outbreak

of the war the bulk of the educated classes were on the side of the King. The Universities, the clergy, the lawyers, the landed gentry, and a large part of the commercial classes, readily supported a cause in which King and Parliament were united, and which seemed at first sight to be the cause both of constitutional right and of imperial unity. The greatest names in the literary world were found on the same side. Junius, Adam Smith, Johnson, and Gibbon. Most men did not trouble themselves to look to see if the colonists were anything more than naughty boys who had made a riot and must take their punishment. But when the time for a general election came round again in 1780, a considerable change was visible in public opinion. The younger generation of educated men, who had been growing up while the war had been raging, and who had followed anxiously the failures of our armies, and had sympathised heartily in the attacks on the mismanagement of affairs, were almost to a man in opposition. William Pitt, William Wilberforce, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan were all elected for the first time in the Parliament of 1780, and all joined the Opposition. The common people had always been on the side of the colonists. In the country during the winter of 1779–80 there were signs that even the landed gentry and the clergy were beginning to desert the banner of the Court. Petitions for peace were largely signed in the counties. Meetings were held, at which squires and clergy appeared and denounced the corruption of the government, and the mismanagement of the war. It is significant of the altered state of opinion among the landed interest that Fox, at a great meeting at Westminster, should have advocated the addition of a hundred county members to the House of Commons. Even the wits, who like rats ever quit a

sinking ship, were coming round, and their shafts became directed against the blunders of the Ministry instead of against the factiousness of the Opposition. The disaster of Saratoga could not dismay them:—

> "Burgoyne, unconscious of impending fates,
> Could cut his way through woods, but not through *Gates*;"

and a report that our enemies were buying up our own horses to use against ourselves only suggested to them the following contrast—

> "We are told that the Monsieurs our horses import,
> But regardless we are of what passes;
> But, Lord, what a racket 'twould make in our Court
> If they kindly would purchase our asses!"

In Parliament alone the arguments of reason and the teachings of experience seemed to have no weight. It was the business of the placeman to vote and not to think. Not even the invective of Fox could penetrate to a conscience or a mind protected by the solid armour of self-interest. The only result of the superiority in argument enjoyed by the Opposition was to raise the price of votes. The elections of 1780 returned a substantial majority for the Ministers, but at a cost so far exceeding that of previous elections that even the King remonstrated, while in the succeeding year the best part of a million of public money was distributed among the friends and supporters of the Ministry by the infamous plan of issuing the new loan to them below the market price.

It was a true instinct that made the Opposition concentrate their energies in 1780–81 upon the reform of Parliament. Whatever Burke and the old Whigs might say, the Americans were perfectly right when they complained that, since the accession of the Hanoverian dynasty, a revolution had taken place in the English

Constitution, which, though silent, was of infinitely greater moment than anything which was done in 1688. The old system of checks and balances, so fondly appealed to by writers on the constitution, though nominally in full force, had practically disappeared. The old division between the legislative and the executive, which Montesquieu thought the vital principle of the constitutional organism, was a corpse when he discovered it. The personal responsibility of the Crown for the well-being of the nation had shrivelled into a rudimentary organ of constitutional life, valuable only as showing what once had been. The authority of Parliament had taken the place of the authority of the King. Parliament had become the keystone of the constitutional structure. The wisdom of Parliament made the laws, the voice of Parliament called forth the Ministers, the finger of Parliament marked out their policy, the eye of Parliament searched out abuses, the hand of Parliament punished their perpetrators, the spirit of Parliament gave life and unity to the whole body of the nation. So complete was the transference of real power from the hands of the King to those of Parliament, that even the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown, an authority essentially personal, and only intelligible because it is personal, had insensibly drifted into the hands of Parliament.

Directly Parliament became in this way the real centre of all government, it was natural that those sections of society which wished for political power should at once direct all their energies to the obtaining of control over Parliament. During the eighteenth century the enslaving of Parliament was an object of policy as deliberately undertaken, and as unremittingly pursued, as ever was the enslaving of the nation by Henry VIII. The aristocracy were first in the field. The great Whig

families who had carried through the Revolution of 1688 were the natural inheritors of its bounty. A combination of events put all political power into their hands at the accession of George I. They were determined to keep it. In the House of Lords their supremacy was unchallenged. They set themselves to make their supremacy in the House of Commons equally undoubted, and with that object grew up the system which has made the name of Walpole infamous for all time. The real charge against Walpole is not that he was corrupt—that he gave pensions and places for votes—statesmen before him and statesmen after him have plunged their arms up to the elbow in corruption, but after a time the muddy waters pass away and the stream runs again pure and free, but that he poisoned the river at its source. He deliberately developed the disease of the body politic, and prevented the healthy flow of the national life. He was the physician who, being called in to regulate a patient's health, sets himself to produce in him an organic disease, in order that he may retain him as a patient for the rest of his life.

It was inevitable that during the progress of years the representative system of England should become antiquated and obsolete. Towns once flourishing had become hamlets; villages once obscure had grown into important trading centres. The franchise which had once been enjoyed by the bulk of the educated citizens had become restricted to a small clique. These were the diseased parts of the representative system. They were unhealthy growths which had developed naturally in the course of years, but which must be pruned and cut off before the tree would bear fruit as it ought. But these were just the parts on which the Whig families fastened in order to make their supremacy complete. So far from pruning

or cutting them away, they delighted in them, they stereotyped them, they made them their own. Here was the chosen field of the local influence of the neighbouring peer, of the open bribes of the borough-monger and of the nabob, and of the gratifications of the dispenser of the secret service money. So successful was this policy, that by the middle of the century the House of Commons represented the House of Lords far more faithfully than it did the nation.

But on the accession of George III. the Whig families found that the King could play their game even better than they. To all the advantages which they possessed in common, George could add the peculiar and subtle influence of royalty. He could concentrate the whole forces of influence upon his object better than could a Minister or a clique. By the pressure of Court authority and lavish additions to the peerage, he soon had the House of Lords at his command. By the exercise of a patronage more unprincipled than that of Newcastle, and a corruption more shameless than that of Walpole, he gained gradually a majority in the House of Commons devoted enough to remain steady during all the blunders of his early years.

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of this pollution of the representative institutions of England. Nearly, if not quite all of the national disasters of the time, it may safely be predicted, would not have happened had the House of Commons been in any sense representative of public opinion. Of course no one at the time of the American War (except the Duke of Richmond) thought that the House of Commons should be representative of those who neither by their property nor by their education had shown themselves entitled to exercise the franchise. The age of democracy had not yet come.

The demand of the reformers of the time was not for a large extension of political power among the people, but for its more even distribution among the educated classes. The House of Commons, it was felt, should be representative, at any rate in a rough way, of the education and good sense of the nation; and a constitution stultified itself which, after carefully dividing political power between the hereditary and the representative principles, allowed the latter to fall entirely under the dominion of the former. A House of Commons, which claimed to be the representative of the Commonalty, and was in reality an assembly of the paid servants of the King, was a contradiction in terms.

The sense of this monstrous unreality runs through the whole of the eighteenth century history. Felt instinctively by the people rather than closely looked into and understood, it is at the root of all the real dangers which threatened the political fabric. It was one of the chief merits of the elder Pitt—the Great Commoner—that he learned early to look for the expression of public opinion away from Parliament, and ever did his best to get the nation as well as Parliament on his side. "You have taught me," said George II. to him on a well-known occasion, "to look for the sentiments of my people elsewhere than in Parliament." Meaner men did not see the necessity. A Newcastle, a Grenville, or a North was content with his parliamentary majority, and as long as that would last did not look further. Wilkes became a hero and a patriot because it was felt that King, Parliament, and Judges were combined to crush him in their own interests, and not in those of law or morality. The City rallied cheerfully to the support of Lord Mayor Crosby and Mr. Alderman Oliver, because they believed that the privilege of Parliament in the mouth of the

House of Commons was but another name for the slavery of the subject. Lord George Gordon and his rioters turned London into a Pandemonium for two days, because the more prejudiced and fanatical of Englishmen would not trust a Parliament returned by royal influence to be a safe guardian of Protestantism.

So it was with the American War. Had Parliament truly represented the educated opinion of the country, it is doubtful whether the great name and influence of Lord Chatham would not finally have predominated over the sense of outraged dignity and of legal right, and have in the end saved the country from war at all. It is certain that after the failure of the policy of coercion had become patent to all, and the alteration of public opinion in the country had made itself felt, it would have been perfectly impossible for the King and Lord North to have pursued their destructive course. As long as the Ministerial majority was safe, Burke might declaim, and Fox might demonstrate, and associations all over the country might meet and protest, but what cared the Ministers? Parliament was the authoritative voice of the country, and Parliament was with them. Lord North was never tired of asserting that the war was the war of Parliament and not of himself, that he had parliamentary authority for all that he had done,—a useless boast indeed to those who knew the secrets of the Treasury, and that a parliamentary majority followed his nod as certainly as the thunder followed that of Zeus!

But there comes a point when even the most servile majority of an unrepresentative Parliament finds the strain of party allegiance too severe, and that point was reached when the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown became known in November, 1781. "O God, it is all over!" cried Lord North, wringing his hands, when he heard of

it. It was not the loss of office that broke down his accustomed imperturbability. Those who accuse Lord North of a mere desire to stick to his place, as Fox did more than once in the heat of debate, much misjudge him. Again and again he had entreated to be allowed to retire, again and again he had weakly consented to go on. For years he had foreseen the catastrophe which had now come, but like most indolent men he had hoped against hope. The brave struggle at sea against the combined fleets of France and Spain had cheered him. The good news sent home by Clinton and Cornwallis at the beginning of the year had enabled him to deaden his conscience with the thought that after all some brilliant victory might yet atone for the disgrace of the past. When the blow came, it came with all the force of a surprise, and for the moment crushed him.

In the general consternation there was one brave heart which never faltered, one iron will which never flagged, one keen mind which at once began to scheme how the disaster might be retrieved. It is impossible not to admire the granite steadfastness of the King. Had it been exercised in a better cause, how posterity would have delighted to recall the simple phrases with which "he nailed his colours to the mast"—

"Lord North's account that the Address was carried this morning by a considerable majority is very pleasing to me, as it shows the House retains that spirit for which this nation has always been renowned, and which alone can preserve it in its difficulties. That some principal members have wavered in their sentiments as to the measures to be pursued, does not surprise me. Many men choose rather to despond on difficulties than to see how to get out of them . . . . With the assistance of Parliament I do not doubt if measures are well connected, a good end may yet be made to this war, but if we despond certain ruin ensues."

The nation, true to the King's wish, did not despond, but it was determined no longer to tolerate the Ministers

who had led it so far along the path of destruction. George III. struggled on bravely, fighting gamely to the end, but he only postponed, and could not avert, the catastrophe. In January, 1782, Lord George Germaine was sacrificed. On February 7, a vote of censure, moved by Fox, upon Lord Sandwich was negatived by a majority of only twenty-two. On the 22nd, General Conway lost a motion in favour of putting an end to the war by only one vote. On the 27th, the motion was renewed in the form of a resolution and carried by a majority of nineteen. Still the King would not give his consent to Lord North's resignation. Rather than commit himself to the opposition, he seriously thought of abdicating his crown and retiring to Hanover.

"I am resolved," he writes on March 17, "not to throw myself into the hands of Opposition at all events, and shall certainly, if things go as they seem to lead, know what my conscience as well as honour dictates as the only way left for me."

Indeed, if it had not been for his large family, and the character of the Prince of Wales, already too well known, it is far from improbable that he would have carried this idea into execution, and retired from a Government of which he was no longer master. By the 20th, however, even George III. saw that the game could not be kept up any longer. He gave permission to Lord North to announce his resignation, and parted with him with the characteristic words: "Remember, my Lord, it is you who desert me, not I who desert you."

Of those who contributed most in Parliament to discredit the American policy of the King, undoubtedly the most prominent by far were Shelburne, Burke, and Fox, and each of them represents not only a different section of the Whig party, but a different type of political capacity. Shelburne showed the greatest cleverness, Burke the

strongest grasp of political principle, Fox the most practical ability. Shelburne, after some vicissitudes, had attached himself closely to Chatham, and after the death of Chatham was looked upon as the leader of his section of the Whig party. Up to the end he affected to believe that peace with the colonies was possible without acknowledging their independence; and partly because of this view, and partly because of his deferential manners, which contrasted favourably with Chatham's affectation and Rockingham's bluntness, he was more acceptable to the King than was any other of the Opposition leaders. He did not speak often in the House of Lords, and, when he did speak, preferred subjects which required the exposition and application of political principles, rather than vigorous attacks upon opponents. On all financial subjects he was an acknowledged authority, was a student of Adam Smith, and not only a firm believer in free trade, but one of the first statesmen who wished to put his principles into practice. An Irish landlord himself, he strongly supported the Irish nationalist movement of 1782, and would willingly have seen trenchant reforms carried out in Irish administration in both Church and State. In religion his conduct was more dictated by prejudice than by conviction. Like so many men of the eighteenth century, he sat very loosely to doctrine, valued religion more as a useful moral force than as having any positive merits of its own, was a great friend of the financier and Congregationalist minister, Dr. Price, and entrusted to him the education of his children. In morality he was far above the level of most of his contemporaries, and it is recorded of him as a strange and startling fact that he was not a gamester. Vigorous in mind, laborious in method, and well disciplined in life, Shelburne seemed to have the world before him, yet never was a man

of his ability who was a greater political failure. The fault with him, as with Charles Fox, was a moral one, but of a very different sort. The studied elaboration of his phrase, the unctuous courtesy of his manner, the affected deference of his address, betrayed instead of concealing the utter insincerity of his heart. His conscience twisted like an eel, it eluded all pursuit, it could not be grasped. His nickname among the satirists was Malagrida, the name of a well-known Portuguese Jesuit. "My Lord," said Goldsmith to him one day, reflectively, "I always wondered why they called you Malagrida. He was a good man." There was no one who was engaged for long in business with Shelburne, who did not believe that he had been betrayed by him. Henry Fox, Grattan, and Charles Fox openly accused him of double dealing. Pitt served him most loyally in 1783, but significantly left him out of his Ministry in 1784, when he was sorely in need of talent. There was a total want of English straightforwardness about him—a complete absence of *bonhomie* and simplicity. The antithesis of Charles Fox, his character suffered from over-elaboration and too much thought, and was wanting in the healthier instincts of frank, reckless boyhood, which made the other so easy to condemn and so easy to forgive.

Edmund Burke will ever remain the most familiar figure, and the greatest problem, among the statesmen of the eighteenth century. The thin, gaunt frame, the keen, eager face, with its sharp-pointed nose and large rimmed spectacles, are as well known to all from the pages of Gillray as is the heavy, swarthy, farmer-like figure of Fox. He had read more and he had thought more on political subjects before he entered Parliament, than his colleagues had done when they ended their political life. He was a

philosopher first and a politician afterwards, yet his philosophy was never purely academical. He insisted always on bringing his general statements to some practical conclusion. He loved to lay down great and abiding political principles, and to move on in stately order to their application, but never did he forget, like so many philosophers, to come to the application eventually. Gifted with a brilliant imagination and a tenacious memory, consumed by an enthusiasm which was at times quite oppressive in its heat, his oratory, when he was at his best, was simply irresistible. He carried his hearers away, like Demosthenes, by the richness and the power of his declamation. Criticism was disarmed, and was content simply to listen and to admire the grandeur of his mind. When he was at his worst his speeches were but the ravings of a madman. Horace Walpole said most justly of him: "Of all the politicians of talent that I ever knew, Burke has the least political art." When he was on his legs he knew nothing except his subject. He did not shine as a debater. He could not endure interruptions. He never knew when the House was getting tired until it began to show its dissatisfaction in a way which made him irritable. Jealous, sensitive, excitable, unreasonable, he was the worst of friends, as well as the worst of enemies. No one did more to keep apart the friends of Rockingham and of Chatham. Deeply grateful to Rockingham personally, and with a much higher opinion of his intellect than most of his contemporaries, he looked upon the Rockingham party as the sole inheritors of orthodox Whig principles, and insisted that Chatham could only be received into the fold on the footing of a convert. It was largely owing to Burke that Rockingham took up a similar attitude with regard to the King, and refused in 1778 to agree to terms with Lord North, by which a

large section of the Opposition were to be included in the Ministry, unless it was distinctly understood that they were to be paramount. Against this decision Fox protested with all his might, urging that the only way to assert influence was to obtain office, as long as it could be done without sacrifice of principle; but Rockingham continued obstinate, and the negotiations came to an end. Burke, however, if responsible for keeping Fox out of office in 1778, made ample amends by his attacks on the Ministry in the following years. His great speeches on American taxation in 1774, and on Conciliation with America in 1775, had already marked him out as the one statesman of the day, who saw the necessity of enunciating a policy for the future regulation of the relations of England and her colonies before it was too late. His speech on Economical Reform in 1780 directed public attention to the plague-spot of the existing parliamentary system. "Temperate," says Horace Walpole, "moderate, and sprinkled with wit and humour, it had such an universal effect upon the whole House, that it was thought he could that day have carried any point he had proposed." Publicity was the only remedy for abuse so gross as that which attended the pension and patronage system of the Court. When the bright light of Burke's inquiry was thrown upon it, no one but Lord George Gordon was found bold enough to support it; yet there after all was the secret of all that was bad in the Court influence. Take away from Lord North the privilege of giving away sinecures, granting pensions, and rewarding votes with gratifications, and his power was gone. It was all very well to declaim, as Fox did, against his mismanagement, his negligence, his incapacity, to denounce his subserviency, to demonstrate the absolute certainty of disaster under his leadership; but attacks such as these made no im-

pression upon his majority. That was not the way to deal with the parliamentary magician.

> "Oh, ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand
> And bound him fast Without his rod reversed
> And backward mutter of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the Lady that sits here
> In stony fetters fixed and motionless."

Until the wand of parliamentary corruption was seized and reversed, it was impossible to free the independent expression of parliamentary opinion from its chains.

If to Burke appertained the chief work of constructing a policy for his party, upon Fox naturally fell the burden of conducting the daily parliamentary battle. His unfailing spirits, his universal popularity, his iron nerves, his unrivalled power as a debater, all marked him out as the real leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. It was during the American War that he learned to perfect the gifts of quick retort, ready wit, clear statement and dashing attack, which made him the first of parliamentary gladiators. It is characteristic of him that he was at his best while Burke was at his worst—in reply. In reading the fragments of his speeches on the American War, which have come down to us, we are struck by a sameness of argument and of method. The attack is always telling and brilliant, but it is conducted again and again in exactly the same fashion. The heavy cavalry are sent charging up the hill again and again, and again and again they recoil baffled from the solid squares of the Government voters. Of parliamentary tactics there is no trace, no attempt to take advantage of jealousies and personal interests, no effort to sow dissension between cliques, and to win over individuals. Again and again the Government stragglers are called back to their allegiance by a direct challenge upon their whole position.

In many ways Fox was singularly well fitted to play the part of a clever parliamentary manager. Though he acted with the Rockingham Whigs, he was never considered as one of them. He won his way in the House by his own unaided exertions, by the sheer ascendency of his talent. He owed nothing to position or property. He had wilfully thrown away whatever advantage he might have reaped from connection. Lord John Cavendish expressed this very clearly in a conversation with Barré in 1780 :—

"Our body has property, &c., but we have not those powers that enable men to take the lead in public assemblies. You see what has been the case of C. Fox. We must naturally give way to such men."

He started, therefore, free from the traditions of the old Whig families. To him the parliamentary struggle was a fair stand-up fight with Lord North. There was no sense of grievance, as there was with Rockingham, at having been ousted from a legitimate monopoly. He was quite ready to get back to office on any reasonable terms. It was not necessary first to appease his pride by acknowledging usurpation.

His gambling and racing interests too brought him into friendly and even affectionate relations with many of the staunchest supporters of the Government. Lord Carlisle was among the dearest of his friends. Lord March, Lord Derby, and the Duke of Ancaster were frequently the companions of his dissipation, and he was even attracted to the Court bully Rigby, by a common attachment to port wine. Had he used his unrivalled social popularity for political ends, with a reasonable exercise of tact, he might easily have detached section after section from the Government phalanx. But nothing really was further from his nature than a policy like this. He was too open, too honourable, and, if the

truth must be told, too careless. There was nothing of the schemer about him, nothing even of the strategist or of the tactician. *Finesse*, management, plan, were all hateful to him. To lead a forlorn hope, to head a brilliant charge, this was his delight, and in this was his strength. He rode forth to redress the wrongs of America in the spirit of a knight errant. He embraced the doctrines of the rights of man with as little of inquiry and as much of sentiment as a hero of chivalry took up the cause of an oppressed princess. He would win his way to office by outshining all competitors, as an esquire of chivalry would win the golden spurs of knighthood by gallant deeds of arms.

But these years were by no means wasted by him. Besides becoming a master of parliamentary debate in the House of Commons, he was learning patience in the school of adversity, and in the world he was winning popularity and influence. This was the time when pecuniary difficulties were pressing hardest upon him, when his losses at play, if not in themselves so large as formerly, were more difficult to meet. He was obliged to sell the estate at Kingsgate left him by his father, and to mortgage the sinecure office of Clerk of the Pells in Ireland, which Lord Holland had contrived to secure for him. He then had to live upon what he could get from his friends, or pick up at Newmarket or Almack's. There was no one from whom he did not borrow. He owed money even to the chairmen, and to the waiters at Brookes's. Often he was reduced to the last shilling. After a particularly bad night at Brookes's, when Fox had lost everything, Beauclerk went to see him in the morning expecting to find him in the last stage of despair. The roué was sitting tranquilly in his armchair reading Herodotus. "What would you have a man to do," he

said with a smile, "who has lost his last shilling?" In 1776 Lord Carlisle writes to George Selwyn:—

"Charles Fox left us this morning. He has been excellent company, in good spirits, and not the worse for having levanted every sou at Newmarket, after having lost everything he could raise upon Stavordale's bond."

In 1779 he writes again: "Charles tells me he has not now nor has had for some time one guinea, and is happier on that account. The macao table flourishes." So great were his difficulties that in 1777 he actually applied to Lord North for his interest for an appointment on the council of India, which Lord North very handsomely promised on the next vacancy, probably reflecting that the payment of a few thousands a year to keep Fox away from Parliament would be a cheap bargain for the Government. In 1778, if Horace Walpole is to be believed, he lent himself to the infamous scheme of the two Foleys, by which Parliament was asked to set aside by statute their father's will, in order that their racing and gambling debts might be paid out of the property which he had left away from them. In 1781 an execution was actually levied in his house and all his goods sold up. Walpole happened to be passing at the time, and Fox, with his usual *nonchalance*, came out and talked to him about the Marriage Act then before Parliament, as if nothing was happening.

But, while he was sinking lower and lower in the slough of debt, he was rapidly becoming the idol of the people of London. The deference paid to his opinion by the associations which were formed in 1779 and 1780 to promote agitation against the Government policy, the enthusiasm with which he was accepted as a candidate and triumphantly returned for Westminster in 1780, the association which was formed to guard his life against

threatened attacks by some of the noted duellists of the day, showed that he had acquired an influence over the people and a place in their hearts similar to that enjoyed by Wilkes in the first years of the reign. He must often have thought, as he listened to the plaudits of the populace, of that scene at Westminster in March, 1771, when he was with difficulty rescued from the infuriated mob who had escorted Lord Mayor Crosby to the House of Commons, and who cursed him and his father as their prey was torn from their grasp.

When Lord North resigned, Fox was in some measure the foremost man in England. He was the greatest debater in the House of Commons, the most beloved champion of the people. It remained to be seen whether the talents which had raised him so high in Opposition would bear the fierce test of office at such a critical time.

CHAPTER IV

THE MINISTRY OF 1782.

FROM the first time that Lord North had entreated his indulgent tyrant the King to relieve him from the responsibilities which he felt were too great for him, George III. had had but one stereotyped answer:—

"I will not put myself into the hands of the Rockingham Whigs, who are the enemies both of my person and of the constitution as I understand it. Any other arrangement I am perfectly willing to accept, but that particular arrangement is out of the question, and any action on your part which must lead to it I shall consider not merely desertion but treachery."

Even at the beginning of 1782, after the disaster of Yorktown, when all Europe was combined with America in arms against him, the King could not bring himself to acknowledge that he would have to bow his head to the yoke. On January 21st he wrote to Lord North:—

"On one material point I shall ever coincide with Lord G. Germaine, that is against a separation from America, and that I shall never lose an opportunity of declaring that no consideration shall ever make me in the smallest degree an instrument in a measure that I am confident would annihilate the rank in which this Empire stands among the European States, and would render my situation in this country below continuing an object to me."

True to this conviction, even when the long-deferred blow fell, and Lord North's Ministry was no more, the

King refused to send for Lord Rockingham. He still flattered himself that he might get together a Ministry from among the followers of Chatham and of Lord North, which would be able to restore peace without granting independence, and Shelburne was the politician whom he fixed upon to aid him in this scheme.

In making choice of Shelburne, George III. showed that cleverness in dealing with individuals which did so much to relieve the mediocrity of his commonplace character. Ambition ruled supreme in Shelburne's breast. It was no light compliment to choose him out from among the rival politicians of the time, as the legitimate inheritor of Chatham's power as well as of Chatham's policy—the one man who was fit to become the trusted arbiter between the Crown and the nation, and, like a second Æneas, to save the King and the constitution from amid the ruins of a falling State. Besides, Shelburne had lately taken pains to let it be known that he was against the separation of America from England, and that he did not wish the King of England to be a mere King of the Mahrattas, with a Peishwa to hold the reins of government.

Shelburne, however, was too clever to fall into the trap. A Ministry which had against it the influence of the Rockingham connection and the talents of Charles Fox, and would not receive the hearty support of Lord North's phalanx of placemen, was foredoomed to failure. The pear was not yet ripe. He saw clearly enough that his best chance of permanent success lay in becoming the successor, not the supplanter, of Rockingham. On the day, obviously not far distant, when the Whig families would have to choose a new leader, the choice must lie between himself and Charles Fox, and between those two could they hesitate for a moment? On his side were

talents certainly eminent, possibly equal, aristocratic connection, royal favour, and an unblemished private character, none of which Charles Fox could claim. Clearly, then, his game was to wait. He respectfully declined to act without Rockingham. "You can do without me," he said to him with commendable frankness, "but I cannot do without you." To satisfy the King's scruple about dealing personally with Rockingham, the negotiations passed through his hands. Before Rockingham consented to take office, he procured a distinct pledge from the King that he would not put a veto upon American independence, if the Ministers recommended it; and on the 27th of March the triumph of the Opposition was completed by the formation of a Ministry, mainly representative of the old Whig families, pledged to a policy of economical reform, and of peace with America on the basis of the acknowledgment of independence.

Fox received the reward of his services by being appointed Foreign Secretary, and Lord Shelburne took charge of the Home and Colonial department. Rockingham himself went to the Treasury, Lord John Cavendish became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Keppel First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Camden President of the Council. Burke was made Paymaster of the Forces, and Sheridan Under-Secretary to his friend Fox. At the King's special request, Thurlow was allowed to remain as Chancellor.

The new Ministry had by no means an easy task before them. They had to pass a scheme of economical reform which was certain to arouse the hostility of many of the most powerful interests in Parliament, they had to restore tranquillity to Ireland, and they had to negotiate a peace which could not fail to be humiliating, and might prove to be disastrous. But their misfortunes did not end

there. In all their policy they were certain of the undisguised hostility of the King, and in the Cabinet itself of the indirect opposition of the Chancellor, and before many days were passed it was equally evident that even the Whig majority were not agreed among themselves.

When Fox met Lord Shelburne shortly after the Ministry was formed, he said, "I see the Administration is to consist of two parts, the one belonging to the King and the other to the public." He understated the case. There were in reality three distinct parties among the Whigs themselves. Shelburne from the first was playing an ambitious game. He wished to gain such a decided ascendency in the Cabinet before Rockingham's death, that he might easily succeed to the chief place. With that object he had manipulated, as far as he could, the Cabinet offices when the Administration was being formed, and could depend almost with certainty on the support of Lord Camden, the Duke of Grafton, and Dunning, lately raised to the peerage with the title of Lord Ashburton; while the vote of Lord Thurlow, which of course was at the King's disposal, was more likely to be with him than with his opponents.

On the other hand, Fox, though he commanded no vote except perhaps that of the Duke of Richmond, was known to be by far the most influential Minister in the House of Commons, and was the idol of the people. He represented, as men could not but feel, a type of Whig principles which, if more aggressive and determined, was certainly much more effective than that of the Whig families. At the close of the American War, and to some extent in the Wilkes case, the people had been called in to express their opinions, and to exercise their influence upon politics. Unrepresented they might be, but if they were to be allowed to meet at public meetings, pass

resolutions and put pressure upon statesmen, they would not remain unrepresented very long. Already schemes of parliamentary reform were in the air. In all probability this very Ministry would have to take up the subject, if they survived the perils of the American peace. Fox was felt on all sides to be the Minister of the future, the representative of the Whiggism of the future, and of the opinions and wishes of the populace of the present, and he accordingly spoke in the Cabinet with much greater effect than the number of votes at his command would warrant.

Between these two opposing sections came the main body of the old Whigs of the Rockingham connection, men who were as totally opposed to organic change or popular government as the King himself, who had been brought up to look on office as the natural monopoly of their family connection, who resented their exclusion from it, as they would resent their exclusion from part of their family property, they had espoused the cause of American independence, not from any abstract love of liberty, but because the policy of coercion was identified with the Tory cuckoo who had seized upon their nest. They were led always as much by personal as by political considerations, and hated Shelburne's personality as much as they disliked Fox's principles.

Composed as they were of these different and discordant sections, the Cabinet no sooner met than it divided into the parties of Shelburne and of Fox, while Rockingham, Conway, and Cavendish tried to hold the balance between them, and Thurlow artfully fomented the dissensions. Fox at once saw the game which Shelburne was playing, and determined to do his best to prevent its success. His distrust of the "Jesuit of Berkeley Square" was ingrained and hereditary. Twenty years before, when Shelburne

was quite a young man, and had attached himself to the rising fortunes of Bute, Lord Holland had strong reason to suspect that he had been betrayed by him; and Charles Fox, with his chivalrous attachment to his father, was not the man to forget, nor, as the wrong was not his own, to forgive. They now found themselves the two most prominent men in a Cabinet whose chief was moribund, and the rivalry between them soon became too keen to preserve even the semblance of unity.

Few Administrations have done so much in a short time as did the Rockingham Ministry during the three months of its existence, and it so happened that the lion's share of the work fell to Fox. Upon his appointment to office his friends noticed a change in habits and manner of life, as complete as that ascribed to Henry V. on his accession to the throne. He is said never to have touched a card during either of his three short terms of office, he hardly ever appeared at Brookes's, he was most attentive and zealous in the duties of his department, and put completely aside his reckless manner of speaking. So great was his consideration for what was due to the Crown, that even George III. became somewhat reconciled to him. Horace Walpole is always rather a partial witness where Fox is concerned, but on this theme he almost rises into eloquence.

"The former (Fox) displayed such facility in comprehending and executing all business, as charmed all who approached him. No formal affectation delayed any service or screened ignorance. He seized at once the important points of every affair, and every affair was thence reduced within a small compass, not to save himself trouble, for he at once gave himself up to the duties of his office. His good humour, frankness, and sincerity pleased, and yet inspired a respect which he took no other pains to attract. The Foreign Ministers were in admiration of him, they had found few who understood affairs or who attended to them, and no man who understood French so well or could explain himself in so few words."

The difference must have been indeed great between mediocrities like Suffolk and Weymouth, or men of indecision and indolence like Lord North, and a man of first-rate ability and keen energy such as was Fox when he attained Cabinet office for the first time. Since Carteret there had not been a Foreign Minister of England so well fitted by his attainments and genius to play a leading part in continental politics.

The Ministry kissed hands on their appointment on the 27th of March. On April 8th Parliament re-assembled, and Fox was immediately called upon to deal with the complicated affairs of Ireland. England's necessity in those days of tyranny was ever Ireland's opportunity, and the closing years of the American War had seen grow up in Ireland a strong and united force of public opinion in favour of legislative freedom, which it was impossible for England to resist. Led by Grattan and supported by the organisation of the volunteers under Charlemont, the Irish nation demanded freedom and self-government. Legislative subjection, apart from legislative union, had ever been the policy of England. By Poyning's Law, the Declaratory Act of George I., and the Permanent Mutiny Act, Irish law, Irish administration of justice, and the Irish army, were all made subject to the control of the English Ministers. The repeal of these measures, the grant of self-government to Ireland, which, without impairing the authority of the Crown, should take away the control of the English Council and House of Lords, was being ardently pressed upon the Ministers as the only alternative to complete independence. On the day of the meeting of Parliament, April 8th, a debate on Irish affairs was introduced by Mr. Eden, the Secretary to Lord Carlisle, who had come to England to tender his own and his chief's resignation. Thinking that the

Lord Lieutenant had been unhandsomely treated by the present Ministry, he determined to embarrass them as much as he could by suddenly demanding, as the only security for peace, that the whole of the Irish demand should be at once granted. Fox replied with great skill, pointing out the factious nature of the proposal, and promising that Irish affairs should receive the prompt attention of the Ministry. On May 17th, he redeemed his promise and brought in a bill for the repeal of the Declaratory Act of George I., which he advocated on the general ground of the injustice of legislating for those who were not represented. At the same time a motion was proposed which authorised the Crown to make such administrative changes as would carry out the policy of self-government adopted by the Irish Parliament. Thus, by the combined action of the two Legislatures, Ireland received the legislative freedom which she was demanding. It is interesting to notice that Lord Loughborough was the only member of either House of Parliament who voted against the most revolutionary proposal which had been brought before Parliament since the Revolution of 1688. The Duke of Portland, who succeeded Lord Carlisle as Lord Lieutenant, though strongly disliking the alteration, was convinced that it was absolutely necessary. "The powers legislative and jurisdictive," he wrote, "claimed by England are become impracticable. If the Irish demands were now refused there would be an end of all government."

A few days before, the Ministers had redeemed their second great pledge. On May 5th, Burke brought in his scheme of economical reform, which was to diminish and render harmless for the future the corrupt influence of the Crown. Here the ice over which the zealous reformer had to glide was of a much more treacherous description.

Shelburne and Thurlow, without actually opposing the scheme, managed in the interests of the King to cut it down in the Cabinet, and Burke soon found that he could not carry out to the full the programme of his famous speech of 1780. Nevertheless the measure, though not perhaps complete, was an exceedingly valuable one. It destroyed a large number of useless posts, and effected a saving to the country of £72,000 a year, but besides this it tolled the knell of systematised parliamentary corruption. It was the first time that Parliament had really set itself to put its house in order, and to make an honest attempt to cure the evil. Its passing is no doubt rather the proof than the cause of the improvement which is noticeable after the American War. That improvement was due to more than one cause. The higher standard of private morality which marked the last decade of the century, and the greater publicity of political life through the increased importance of the press, had no doubt their share in diminishing corruption. But the cause which had most effect was the return of Mr. Pitt to power in 1784 by so unmistakable a majority. It destroyed corruption by taking away the reasons for it, since it was sheer waste to shower gifts and pensions on those who were certain in any case to vote on the right side. Still Burke's bill marks the beginning of a new era of purity, and it emanated from a Ministry who were more free from corruption than any Ministry which England had yet seen during the century.

On the question of parliamentary reform the Ministry were much divided. Rockingham and Burke were for leaving things alone, thinking that, as it was impossible to redress all anomalies, it was safest not to attempt to redress any. The Duke of Richmond, on the contrary, was in favour of annual parliaments, manhood suffrage,

and equal electoral districts. On the 7th of May Pitt, who, during the two years in which he had sat in Parlialiament, had been rapidly growing in reputation, brought in a motion for a committee to consider the reform of the representation, and Fox supported him on the double ground that the county members had always proved themselves much more independent in character than the representatives of the boroughs, and that it was for the welfare of the nation that all interests which had any stake in the country should be represented in Parliament. The motion was lost by a small majority of only twenty in a fairly full House, and the reformers were never again so near victory until 1832.

During these weeks, when the Ministry were so successful in Parliament, their internal dissensions were growing worse and worse. The greater ability Fox showed in the House of Commons, the greater the jealousy Shelburne displayed in private, and the more numerous the intrigues which he undertook. The more active was Shelburne in the Cabinet, the more did he arouse the suspicions of Fox. On the 12th of April, before the Ministry had been three weeks in office, Fox had already sniffed the coming storm.

"We had a Cabinet this morning," he writes to Fitzpatrick; "in which, in my opinion, there were more symptoms of what we had always apprehended than had ever hitherto appeared. The subject was Burke's bill, or rather the message introductory to it. Nothing was concluded, but in Lord Chancellor there was so marked an opposition, and in your brother-in-law so much inclination to help the Chancellor, that we got into something very like warm debate."

On the 15th he writes again:—

"We have had another very teasing and wrangling Cabinet. . . . Lord Chancellor, as you may imagine, dislikes it (*i.e.* Burke's bill); Lord Shelburne seems more bothered about it than anything else, does not understand it, but, in conjunction with Lord Ashburton, throws difficulties in its way."

On the 28th he adds:—

"With respect to affairs here, they are really in such a state as is very difficult to describe. I feel them to be worse than they were, and yet I do not know what particular circumstance to state as to the cause of this feeling. Shelburne shows himself more and more every day, is ridiculously jealous of my encroaching upon his department, and wishes very much to encroach upon mine. He hardly liked my having a letter from Grattan or my having written one to Charlemont. He affects the Minister more and more every day, and is, I believe, perfectly confident that the King intends to make him so."

By the 11th of May the uneasy feeling had grown, Fox was much disheartened at the scanty attendance at the House and hurt at a personal attack made on him by Dundas. Looking to the future, he saw in the coalition of Shelburne and Pitt a danger of losing the latter. A later letter from Mr. Hare, one of Fox's most attached friends, mentions the suspicion that Dundas's attack was "systematical and concocted not a hundred miles from Berkeley Square." When mutual suspicion and distrust were so rife, it did not require much to produce a serious quarrel, and in the course of the peace negotiations at Paris the necessary materials for a very grave misunderstanding were not long in making their appearance.

Seldom had English Foreign Minister a more thankless and difficult task before him than had Fox. When he assumed the seals of office England was at war with France, Spain, and Holland, in addition to her revolted colonies in America. The northern Powers under the leadership of Russia, though not at war, were in a condition of decided hostility under the provisions of the Armed Neutrality, since their doctrine of free ships, free goods, was directed against the English claim to seize enemies' goods carried in neutral bottoms. The maritime nations of Europe had, in fact, taken advantage of England's

difficulties to rid themselves of a superiority, which they detested all the more because they could not under ordinary circumstances dispute it. It was generally thought on the continent that the year 1782 must see the fall of England's upstart greatness, and reduce her again to the condition of a second-rate Power, from which the genius of Marlborough and Chatham had so recently raised her. De Grasse having driven the English fleet off the American waters in the preceding year, was endeavouring, at the head of the combined French and Spanish fleets, to complete his success by the capture of Jamaica and the rest of the English West Indies. Crillon, flushed with his victory at Minorca, was preparing to wrest the rock fortress of Gibraltar from the grip of the islander, and to restore it again to its legitimate owners. With America and the Mediterranean emancipated from English domination, the Seven Years' War would indeed be fitly avenged; the star of the English Empire would set, and the way once more be opened for the supremacy of the House of Bourbon in Europe.

Such were the visions which floated before the eyes of Vergennes, the Foreign Minister of France, such were the dreams which it was Fox's business to prove to be illusions. With characteristic energy and clear sightedness, he at once fixed upon his plan and set himself to carry it out. His main object was to isolate the House of Bourbon, and hold it up before the eyes of Europe once more as the real disturbing element among the nations of the continent, the real enemy of all peaceful progress. He saw that the chief difficulties in the way of peace must come from France, for France had not merely objects to gain, but losses to revenge. He was not afraid to face the possibility of having to continue the war with

France and Spain. England, shattered and exhausted as she was, had yet pluck enough left, he thought, to hold her own against the House of Bourbon, though she could not stand up against the world. If he could detach Holland and America from the French alliance by giving to them what they wanted, if he could exchange the suspicious hostility of the north for friendly alliance by surrendering the right of search, he would then be able to treat with France on equal terms. The design was essentially a good one. England had nothing to gain by insisting on the right of search. If she forced the question to a decision she would most certainly be beaten; while if she gracefully yielded now, it was more than probable that her very opponents would before long claim to exercise it for their own protection. She must stoop if she wanted to conquer. To a generation which remembered the diplomacy of Kaunitz and Madame de Pompadour the spectre of French aggression was ever formidable. It is quite possible that had Fox been complete master of the Cabinet, a brilliant diplomatic success might have conspired with the victories of Rodney and Elliot to throw a halo of glory round the last days of the Ministry of Rockingham.

But it was not to be. Frederick the Great, to whom Fox addressed a long letter in the hope of inducing him to act as mediator in favour of England, was too old and too unforgiving to mix himself up with European politics on behalf of a Power which had treated him so badly twenty years before. Holland refused to enter into any negotiations apart from her allies. The Empress Catherine II. coupled her offers of alliance with conditions which the King and the majority of the Cabinet were not prepared to accept, though apparently Fox and Sir James Harris, the ambassador at St. Petersburg, thought them

reasonable. But the most serious difficulties with which Fox had to contend came from within, not from without. By the division of work among the two Secretaries of State, all matters which related to the colonies were under the control of Shelburne, while those relating to foreign Governments belonged to the department of Fox. Consequently it became exceedingly important to these two Ministers whether independence was to be granted to the American colonies by the Crown of its own accord, or should be reserved in order to form part of the general treaty of peace.

According to Fox's plan, independence was to be offered at once fully and freely to the Americans. They would thus gain at a blow all that they wanted. Their jealousy of French and Spanish interests in America would at once assert itself, and England would have no difficulty in bringing them over to her side in the negotiations with France. Such was Fox's scheme, but unfortunately, directly America became independent, she ceased to be in any way subject to Shelburne's management, and the negotiations for peace would pass wholly out of his control into the hands of Fox. Such a thing was not to be endured for a moment. It would give his rival too great an advantage. Shelburne at once threw his whole weight into the opposite scale. He urged with great effect that to give independence at once was to throw away the trump card. It was the chief concession which England would be required to make, the only one which she was prepared to make; and to make it at once, before she was even asked, was wilfully to deprive herself of her best weapon. The King and the Cabinet adopted Shelburne's view. Fox's scheme for the isolation of France failed, and a double negotiation for peace was set on foot. Shelburne and Franklin took charge of the

treaty with America, Fox and M. de Vergennes that with France and Spain and Holland.

An arrangement of this sort could hardly have succeeded had the two Secretaries been the firmest of friends; since they were rivals and enemies, it was foredoomed to failure. Fox chose as his accredited envoy to the French Court Mr. Thomas Grenville, the younger brother of Lord Temple, a man of some ability, but young and inexperienced. He reached Paris on the 8th of May, and on the 23rd the Privy Council authorised him to propose the independence of America in the first instance to the belligerent Powers as a basis of peace. Long, however, before Grenville was in formal communication with the representatives of the allied Powers, Shelburne's envoy had been in confidential communication with Franklin. On the 22nd of March, two days after the resignation of Lord North, Franklin, who was the agent of the American Congress at Paris, wrote to Lord Shelburne as a personal friend expressing his desire for peace. On the 6th of April Shelburne, in his capacity of Colonial Secretary, sent a Scotch merchant resident in London, named Oswald, over to Paris to consult with Franklin on the subject. Oswald was described in the letter of recommendation which Shelburne sent, as a "practical man and conversant in those negotiations which are most interesting to mankind." In reality he was much more. He was not only a capable man of business, but a sound and intelligent disciple of Adam Smith. Unfortunately he was completely unversed n diplomacy, and too simple-minded and straightforward to be a match for the astute American. Franklin, naturally enough, was delighted with him, introduced him to Vergennes, wrote to Shelburne saying that he desired no other channel of communication, and even broached

in conversation with Oswald an idea, which had been long in his mind, that it would serve greatly to lay a strong foundation of friendship between England and the United States, if England of her own accord was to surrender Canada. Oswald seemed struck with the idea, promised to talk the matter over with Shelburne, and borrowed the paper which had served as a basis of Franklin's conversation, in order to show it to Shelburne when he got home. Care, however, was taken to place on record a note to the effect that the paper was strictly private, containing "merely conversation matter between Mr. O. and Mr. F." On his return to London, Oswald at once showed the document to Shelburne, who thought it important enough to retain it for a day, and he showed it certainly to Ashburton and probably to the King. He made no reference to it whatever to the rest of his colleagues, and never hinted at its existence to Fox, who was engaged with him in the negotiations for peace.

On the 23rd of April Oswald was formally authorised to return to Paris, as the duly accredited agent of the English Government, to conclude a treaty with America on the basis of independence. On the 4th of May he found himself once more with Franklin, to whom he returned the paper, saying that it seemed to have made an impression on Lord Shelburne, and that he (Oswald) believed the matter might be settled to the satisfaction of America, but he did not wish it mentioned at the beginning of the negotiations. On the 8th of May Grenville arrived in Paris, and negotiations began in real earnest. Oswald seems to have done his best not to interfere with Grenville, and even returned to England for a few weeks to be out of the way, and Shelburne himself, in his despatches to him, insisted upon the necessity of showing a united front to the enemy, yet the

existence of a double negotiation could not but cause disagreements. On the 18th of May came the glorious news of the destruction of the French fleet under De Grasse by Rodney; but much of the value which it might have had in inducing the French to accept reasonable terms, was neutralised by the naive confession of Oswald to Franklin, that peace was absolutely necessary to England, "her enemies might do what they pleased with her, they had the ball at their feet and it was hoped they would show their magnanimity." Fox had from the first suspected Shelburne of playing a double game, and Shelburne, on his part, suspected Fox of intending to oust him from any share whatever in the treaty by claiming that the decision of May 23rd was in fact a recognition of the independence of the States, by virtue of which they had ceased to be, even in name, colonies of Great Britain. Vergennes knew perfectly well the state of affairs in the English Cabinet, and was by no means anxious to expedite matters with Grenville, as he saw in Shelburne the future Minister and the King's friend. Naturally enough, nothing could persuade the French courtiers that the presence of two agents did not imply the existence of two authorities and two policies, and Lafayette gave mortal offence to Grenville by laughingly telling him that he had just left "Lord Shelburne's ambassador at Passy."

Just when the minds of Fox and Grenville were thus highly inflamed against Shelburne, an evil chance put the latter in possession of the secret of the Canada paper. In a conversation between Oswald and Grenville, the former, thinking that Grenville had already partially heard about the matter from Franklin, told him the whole story, and added that Lord Shelburne had proposed that he (Oswald) should have a separate commission to treat with the

American commissioners. Here at once to Grenville's mind was a full confirmation of his worst surmises. Shelburne was proved out of the mouth of his own agent to have been carrying on a separate negotiation behind the backs of the Cabinet, and secretly to have been manœuvring to supplant the accredited representative of England by his own servant, while outwardly he was urging the closest possible union between the two. In indignant haste he wrote to acquaint Fox of the discovery he had made, and Fox took a blacker view of Shelburne's conduct than even Grenville had done. The Canada paper was new to him, and to all the Cabinet too, except Ashburton. Shelburne stood convicted of concealing a most important despatch from his colleagues, as well as of carrying on a separate negotiation behind their backs. It was treachery of which Malagrida alone among English statesmen was capable, worthy of the man who had betrayed Lord Holland years ago. In hot anger he hurried off to Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond and Lord John Cavendish, and showed them Grenville's letter. They agreed that the thing wore an ugly look, and that the Cabinet must be consulted. It was clear after this that both Shelburne and Fox could no longer remain in the same Cabinet, and be jointly entrusted with the peace negotiations. The question between them really resolved itself into one of confidence, as to which of the two should have the conduct of the treaty. Three meetings of the Cabinet were held in quick succession, and at the final meeting of the 30th of June, Fox proposed that independence should be granted to America irrespective of a treaty for peace, and maintained that the Cabinet had already practically decided that question by their minute of the 23rd of May. This raised in the simplest form a question of confidence

between the two statesmen, for Shelburne had constantly asserted that the decision of the 23rd of May was only conditional, and that independence ought not to be granted unless accompanied by a satisfactory treaty. The Cabinet voted on it as a purely party question. Rockingham's absence deprived Fox of a powerful supporter, and Conway—that innocent man as Shelburne called him, who had a casting vote in the Cabinet, but never knew it—shouted with the largest crowd. Fox, defeated and despairing, only refrained from resigning there and then because he would not embitter Rockingham's last moments upon earth.

Fox had been but three months and a few days in office, but in that time he had more than justified the opinions which his friends had already formed of him. He had proved himself by far the ablest English statesman of his time. In Parliament his ascendency was unchallenged, and he had shown that he could excel just as certainly in the difficult art of ministerial defence as he had formerly in that of dashing attack. His leadership of the House of Commons, short as it was, had been marked with courtesy and tact, and his treatment of the Irish question in particular had been noticeable for his judgment no less than for his boldness. In his conduct of foreign affairs he was hampered by dissensions within the Cabinet and humiliation without; yet although his own European scheme was a failure, and his endeavour to obtain peace incomplete, he certainly succeeded in raising the reputation of England among foreign nations. In his dealings with his own colleagues he showed more of the headstrong, self-willed spirit with which men had been accustomed to credit him. Shelburne's conduct no doubt was insincere and irritating to the last degree. He was playing a game from the first,

a game intensely hateful to Fox, and was playing it with success. The elaborate protestations of sincerity, which distinguished his public utterances, must have been doubly trying to one who saw through them so plainly. Clear-minded himself, and transparent in his honesty, Fox hated hypocrisy, and Shelburne was not merely a hypocrite, but a successful hypocrite. The want of political management, which afterwards wrecked so much of Fox's life, was conspicuous at every stage of the quarrel. He rushed into the lists with Shelburne in the first blaze of his indignation at finding himself outwitted, and so played into the hands of his adversary. The evidence he possessed, though convincing enough to a mind already from other circumstances inclined to condemn, was not of a nature to bear out before the Cabinet the charge of duplicity of conduct which he himself believed. Nothing was ever alleged against Shelburne which could not be explained by errors in judgment and undue reticence, wanting no doubt in frankness, but hardly treacherous or double dealing. The popular estimate of the quarrel found expression in one of Gillray's earliest and best cartoons. Fox was depicted as the Miltonic Satan standing on a roulette table with his pockets turned inside out, scowling at the rising sun of Shelburne's glory as he poured forth his hate in the well-known lines :—

> "To thee I call,
> But with no friendly voice, and add thy name—
> *Shelburne!*—to tell thee how I hate thy beams
> That bring to my remembrance from what state
> I fell.

Fox had to rest a case which was essentially personal on grounds which were essentially political. He had to induce the Cabinet deliberately to accept the bolder

and more dangerous policy, and he had to do this deprived of the aid of the only man of real weight who was on his side. What wonder, therefore, if the battle fought under such circumstances ended in a defeat, and the country was deprived of the services of her ablest son just when she was most in need of them ?

CHAPTER V.

THE COALITION.

On the 30th of June, 1782, the Cabinet decided for Shelburne against Fox. On the 1st of July Rockingham died, and on the 2nd Shelburne accepted from the King the task of forming a Ministry. The next three days were spent in negotiations as plausible as they were hollow. Fox was necessarily in a great difficulty. His charges against Shelburne were not such as could be published abroad to his colleagues, much less to the world. A conviction of a man's insincerity is usually formed from numberless small incidents all pointing in the same direction, not from one or two clear and strong cases of deception which can be made the subject of a public accusation. In order to state his whole case against Shelburne, Fox must have detailed at length all the secret history of the Rockingham Cabinet and of the Paris negotiations. Something would have doubtless been gained if he had been in a position to enter the lists himself for the premiership, and boldly claim that the gravity of the situation demanded the ablest man at the head. But this was not possible. At every crisis of his life his sullied character stood up in judgment against him and drove him back from the portals of fame. How could

the spendthrift, the libertine, and the gamester, so recently a convert to Whig principles, presume to be the successor of the blameless Rockingham, to lead the great houses of Bentinck and of Cavendish? The Whig families were nothing if not respectable. To be led by a ruined man of fashion and a political adventurer was a degradation not to be thought of for a moment.

Yet there was no other candidate of even moderate attainments for the office. If Fox was hopelessly handicapped by his want of character and position, his colleagues were even more impossible for want of ability. The Duke of Grafton had already been proved to be a failure, and his character was no better than that of Fox. Lord John Cavendish was respectable enough, but narrow and priggish in temper. The Duke of Richmond had lately plunged too deep into speculative politics. The party had therefore to give up all thoughts of getting a *man* to lead it, and had to content itself with a figure-head. The Duke of Portland was rich, respectable, and thoroughly safe. He seemed to divide parties least, and he was accordingly chosen as the person whom the purely Whig section of the Cabinet wished to see at the head of affairs. It was unfortunate, as Horace Walpole bitterly said, that the party could at such a crisis produce nothing better than a succession of mutes. It is the hereditary curse of narrow aristocratic cliques to suppress independent ability, and to deify the commonplace. Portland, though his Irish enemies might sneer at him as a "fit block to hang Whigs on," was at any rate a worthy successor to Stanhope and to Pelham, to Newcastle, to Devonshire, and to Rockingham. It is characteristic of the great Whig families, who ruled England in the eighteenth century, that, with the exception of Walpole, they never assimilated to themselves,

and utilised for their country one man of real independent talent. Townshend, Carteret, Pulteney, Pitt, Henry Fox, Shelburne, all of them had one by one either to break with the great families or to conquer them. It is a sufficient condemnation of any political party to record that with the two ablest men in England in its ranks, at a crisis of the country's history so grave and so foreboding, it should have been bound by its own principles to pass over a Fox and a Burke, and to accept a Portland as its leader and representative.

Shelburne was not the man to let slip any advantage over his antagonist which dexterous management could give him. He at once posed before the country as the successor of Chatham, trying to free the King and the country from the domination of a faction. To the King he appeared as the champion of his right to choose his own Ministers, and his defender against the phalanx of the hated Whig oligarchy who wished to reduce him to a nonentity. Absolutely secure of his own position at Court, he could afford to make the fairest of promises to Fox, and handsomely offer him the leadership of the House of Commons, for Fox, he knew, would not serve under him in any circumstances. When the offer was refused, and the Duke of Portland chosen as the candidate of the discontented section of the Whigs, it was easy for Shelburne to represent the whole affair as merely an audacious attempt of a few politicians to dictate to the King, and not content with their fair share of power, to insist on absorbing the whole administration.

Never was statesman put by the course of events and the skill of his opponents into a more thoroughly false position than was Fox throughout the whole affair. In reality he was the one man who had a clear and well-considered policy for dealing with the American and

foreign difficulties of England as a whole. He appeared to be pursuing the narrowest interests of a party clique, wholly apart from the general welfare. In reality he had quarrelled with Shelburne, because he had found that he was deceiving his colleagues, and was convinced that he would, as a Minister, prove another Lord North. He appeared to have resigned in a pet because the Cabinet disagreed with him on a point of detail in the negotiations, and because he could not force on the counsels of the King a respectable nonentity far inferior to Shelburne in ability and experience. In reality his motives were dictated purely by what he believed to be the public interest. He appeared to be breaking up his party in the middle of foreign war simply to satisfy his own personal antipathies. Conway, Keppel, and the Duke of Richmond took this view. They trusted Shelburne rather than Fox. Temple, Thomas Grenville's brother, thought the same; Fox had undone himself he said. Sir Gilbert Elliot and Adam Smith, on the other hand, considered that he could have done nothing else. Sheridan put the same view in an epigram: "Those who go are right, for there is really no other question but whether, having lost their power, they ought to stay and lose their characters." Fox himself summed up the situation in a letter to Thomas Grenville, which shows how deeply he felt his position.

"I assure you that the thing which has given me most concern is the sort of scrape I have drawn you into; but I think I may depend upon your way of thinking for forgiving me, though to say one can depend upon any man is a bold word after what has passed within these few days. I am sure, on the other hand, that you may depend upon my eternal gratitude to you for what you have undergone on my account, and that you will always have the greatest share in my friendship and affection. I do not think you will think these less valuable than you used to do. I have done right, I am sure I have. The Duke of Richmond thinks very much otherwise and will do wrong. I cannot

help it. I am sure my staying would have been a means of deceiving the public and betraying my party, and these things are not to be done for the sake of any supposed temporary good. I feel that my situation in the country, my power, my popularity, my consequence, nay my character are all risked, but I have done right, and therefore in the end it must turn out to be wise. If this fail me, the pillared firmament is rottenness, and earth's base built on stubble."

These were brave and heartfelt words, but many years were to elapse before their fulfilment. Most politicians looked at Fox's conduct as wanting in judgment if not in principle. The world in general, judging only from the outside, thought it self-seeking and unpatriotic. The King, whose dislike had been partially mollified by the magic of Fox's personality, returned at once to all his old hostility. Only Lord John Cavendish, Burke, and the Solicitor-General, Lee, left office with Portland and Fox, and the gap was more than supplied by the entrance of William Pitt into the Cabinet as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Fortune seemed to smile on Shelburne. He had played boldly and unscrupulously for the stake, and had won it. The battle had been hard, and at one time doubtful, but in the end victory had declared for him all along the line. His rival was not only beaten, but discredited. Secure of the support of the King, strengthened by the accession of Pitt, assisted by all the prestige that a successful party fight gives, Shelburne might well look forward to a long and unclouded tenure of political power.

His Administration lasted not quite seven months, and for more than half that period Parliament was in recess. Prorogued soon after the change of Ministry, it did not meet again till December. During that time the negotiations for peace had dragged slowly along, and much had happened to show how correct Fox's original estimate of the state of affairs had been. The opponents of Lord North had certainly been visited by a gleam of fortune's

sunshine which had but rarely visited that unlucky statesman. One of the first acts of the Rockingham Ministry had been to supersede, with a discourtesy which almost amounted to insult, Admiral Rodney, who was in command of the West Indian fleet, and who had made himself particularly obnoxious to the Whigs by his conduct at the capture of St. Eustatia in 1781. But, fortunately for them, before the despatch arrived, Rodney had entirely destroyed the allied fleets under De Grasse and captured the French admiral. "You have conquered," said Lord North in the House, "but with the arms of Philip." On the 13th of September in the same year the combined attack by the French and Spanish forces upon the rock of Gibraltar, which had been so long preparing, was delivered. Huge floating batteries, carrying no less than 212 guns, especially constructed by the French engineer, D'Arcon, for this work, poured a storm of shot and shell upon the devoted fortress at a distance of only 900 yards. In the bay behind them were moored the whole Mediterranean fleets of France and Spain, while from the shore the attack was watched by a land army of 40,000 men, and assisted by the fire of land batteries of nearly 186 guns. Never was plan so elaborate in its preparation and so terrible in its attack. For nine hours the fortress was subjected to a terrific, converging fire from over 400 guns, while it only had 96 guns with which to reply. But in the afternoon it became slowly visible to the band of heroic defenders that their red-hot shot was finding its way through the armour of the floating batteries. One by one they began to show signs of distress. Flames rushed up from their holds; a swarm of boats shot out from the fleet to try and tow them out of fire, but they were scattered by the red-hot balls like autumn gnats by a hailstorm, and the huge monsters

were left to their fate. During the night the flames burnt brighter, and dull explosions from time to time told the defenders that their enemies were one by one disappearing beneath the waters. When morning broke, there was not one of them left. The English flag yet waved unharmed over the stubborn fortress rock, and one more story of heroic daring was added to the annals of the English race.

These two great victories showed that Fox had good reason for thinking that even in her exhausted state England was more than a match for France and Spain. The course of the negotiations with America soon showed that his hopes of gaining the American agents to the side of England against the interests of France and Spain, were by no means chimerical.

It was soon agreed that Canada should remain British, and that the thirteen States should become independent, but much time was spent over the boundary lines. By the Quebec Act of 1774 the frontiers of Canada were made to stretch as far south as the Ohio, while between the western frontier of Georgia and the Mississippi lay a large district, almost uninhabited, except by Indians, over which the Spaniards claimed a vague suzerainty. France, conscious that she had led Spain into the war by the promise of recovering Gibraltar, which she could not fulfil, was most anxious to confine the United States to the Alleghanies, in order to keep all the uninhabited Indian country free for Spanish colonisation. Shelburne, fully alive to the advantage of sowing dissensions between America and France, and not being able to look forward a hundred years to the time when the territory, then so thinly populated, should become the great trade centre of the west, voluntarily offered to surrender to the States all English claims on the country between the Great Lakes

and the Ohio, and to endeavour to obtain for them from their allies the Mississippi as their western boundary. It was all important to the Americans to get room for free expansion to the west. Day by day, as the negotiations proceeded, community of interest brought the English and American envoys closer together; day by day the breach between the Spaniards and the Americans grew wider and wider, until at last, by a bold repudiation of the express orders of Congress, the Americans signed the preliminaries of peace with the English on the 2nd of December, 1782, before the continental Powers were prepared to agree. Finding their hand thus forced by the Americans, France and her allies had to give way, and on the 20th of January, 1783, a general peace was at last signed, by which the only substantial gains achieved by France were the acquisition of Tobago, Senegal, and Goree, and the security of her right of fishing off Newfoundland, while Spain had to be satisfied by the two Floridas and Minorca. America, on the contrary, had gained all that she wished for, and more than she had a right to ask. All claim for compensation on behalf of the Loyalists was abandoned. The complete independence of the thirteen United States, the extension of the western frontier to the Mississippi, and of her northern frontier to the Great Lakes, put into her hands the keys of North America. From that moment it became certain that if she was only able to retain her unity, her supremacy over the whole continent was only a matter of time.

Shelburne looked upon the treaty of Versailles as the triumph of his diplomatic skill. He had good reason for the boast. When the negotiations first began, nothing could have been more pitiable than the condition of England. Oswald, Shelburne's own envoy, told Franklin that the ball was at his feet. When the treaty of 1763

was mentioned to Vergennes as a basis of negotiation, he scouted the suggestion, and intimated that it was now the turn of France, and she would make the most of her opportunity. Yet when the treaty was made, England parted with little that was valuable, and she succeeded in retaining intact Gibraltar and her East Indian possessions. There were two sections of politicians, however, to whom the treaty not unnaturally appeared in very different light. To Lord North and his followers, who had taken up arms to establish the authority of England over her colonies, the wide extension of American frontier seemed criminally generous, and the desertion of the Loyalists criminally treacherous. With Fox, besides the feeling of dissatisfaction, there was a sense of injustice. Shelburne had ploughed with his heifer, and could not even then avoid a catastrophe. He had won the terms which he had obtained, by playing off the Americans against the French, and yet he was the man who had in the Rockingham Cabinet, nine months ago, thwarted the very same plan because it was suggested by Fox! Had it then been adopted, there would have been no necessity for the lavish grants of Indian territory, no cause for the shameful desertion of England's allies. And so it happened that in the turn of fortune's wheel, Fox and Lord North found themselves leading a common Opposition, and drawn towards each other by a common hatred.

Just when Fox and Lord North were being attracted to one another, the Ministry of Shelburne was breaking up. Lord Camden had never intended to serve for more than three months, and Keppel only stayed on as long as the war lasted. By the beginning of 1783 more dangerous dissidents than these had declared themselves, and in the case of each one the conduct of the first Minister was the real cause of discord. The Duke of Richmond refused to

attend the Council because of Shelburne's assumption of too much power; the Duke of Grafton resigned the Privy Seal complaining of his systematic withholding of confidence. Lord Carlisle resigned the office of Lord Steward. Throughout the ministerial ranks there reigned the same profound distrust and suspicion. On all sides was heard justification of Fox's conduct in the previous summer. Even Pitt, who alone held his tongue and remained scrupulously loyal to Shelburne throughout, said afterwards that whatever sins he might have committed as a Minister, he had atoned for them all in advance by serving under Lord Shelburne for a year.

When parties were in this state of utter disintegration, it was natural that a desire should manifest itself for a coalition, strong enough both in personal ability and political influence to put an end to these spectral Ministries which flitted past like figures on a kaleidoscope. The establishment of a strong and lasting Administration on a sound basis, or, as the phrase then ran, "on a broad bottom," was the necessity of the hour. Several schemes of coalitions were in the air. Through the mediation of Dundas and Adam, overtures were made by Shelburne to Lord North to admit some of his friends to office in return for a full and unconditional support. Lord North, it was understood, probably at Pitt's demand, was not to claim office for himself. On the failure of this scheme Shelburne sent Pitt to Fox to see on what terms he could wheedle back the erring sheep into the fold; but Fox absolutely refused to hear of any scheme which involved the continued pre-eminence of Shelburne. "It is impossible for me," said Fox frankly, "to belong to any Administration of which Lord Shelburne is the head." Meanwhile some of the younger members in the House had conceived the idea, that of all the coalitions possible,

one between Lord North and Fox offered the best opportunities of lasting success. The first to suggest the scheme was Lord Loughborough, but the principal movers in it were Lord John Townshend and George North, Lord North's son; and they were soon afterwards joined by Mr. Eden and Richard Fitzpatrick, the bosom friend and confidant of Fox. Some difficulty was experienced with Lord North's followers, and apparently little progress had been made beyond a number of private conversations up to the 12th of February, 1783. On that day Dundas, who was very earnest to bring about the coalition between Lord North and Shelburne, went to see Adam, Lord North's most trusted friend, and in the course of a long conversation told him, with the object of making him see the necessity of an immediate junction with Shelburne, that Shelburne had made up his mind to resign if he was left alone, which would undoubtedly result in a coalition between Pitt and Fox, and the exclusion of Lord North from power for the rest of his life. The threat had a very different result to that which Dundas expected. Lord North and his friends fully recognised the importance of preventing a coalition between Fox and Pitt, but determined to use the negotiations already in existence for an alliance with Fox to effect the purpose. Eden and George North were able by dangling the sword of Damocles over their heads to persuade the rank and file of Lord North's party. Burke, who had embraced the idea with his wonted enthusiasm, though less than his wonted wisdom, undertook to answer for the Rockingham Whigs. On the 14th of February everything was prepared, Fox and Lord North met at the house of George North, and arranged terms of alliance. Lord North agreed that the system of government by departments should be abolished, and the direct power of the King

over the Administration checked. Fox acknowledged that economical reform had gone far enough, and both consented that parliamentary reform should be an open question. Upon these terms all former animosity was laid aside. An amendment to the address on the peace was drawn up by Lord North, which Lord John Cavendish was to move and Fox support, and if, as was expected, the division list showed a majority for them, they were to form a combined Administration based on mutual goodwill and confidence.

Such is the secret history of the famous coalition, perhaps the best known of all the eighteen Ministries of George III. The plot, if plot it was, was completely successful. Ministers found themselves in a minority of seventeen on a motion of censure on the peace, and on the 24th of February Shelburne resigned. For five weeks England was without a government. The King strained every nerve to avoid accepting the coalition. He appealed to Pitt, to Lord Gower, to Lord North apart from Fox, to Fox apart from the Duke of Portland, to Pitt again, to Lord Temple, and even to Thomas Pitt, who was quite undistinguished as a statesman, but it was no use. On the 2nd of April he bowed to the inevitable, but with as ill a grace as he could. "When Charles Fox came to kiss hands," wrote Lord Townshend, "George III. turned back his ears and eyes just like the horse at Astley's when the tailor he had determined to throw was getting on him." The Duke of Portland succeeded Shelburne at the Treasury. Lord North and Fox became the Secretaries of State. Lord John Cavendish returned to the Exchequer, Keppel to the Admiralty, and Burke to the Paymastership, the followers of Lord North, such as Loughborough, Carlisle, Stormont, &c., were rewarded with the lower offices.

Few combinations in the history of political parties have been received by historians and posterity with more unqualified condemnation than the coalition of 1783. It has been denounced as monstrous and unnatural; it has been ascribed to the influence of the worst passions which degrade human nature. Petty spite, greed of power, revenge and avarice—such are the parents whose fell union ushered forth into the world this child

> "Born in bitterness
> And nurtured in convulsion."

And even the methods adopted to bring about its ruin have been condoned on the principle that vermin are out of the protection of the law. And yet it may well be questioned whether a great deal of this righteous indignation is not, as is too often the case in history, merely the penalty of failure. The advantages which England derived from its overthrow are written large on the page of history. She obtained a strong and stable government more truly representative of the real wishes of Englishmen, than any Government since the days of Walpole. She obtained a Minister who, both in his virtues and his failings, was essentially the Minister whom England delighted to honour. She found a fit object for her deepest loyalty in a King, now for the first time in thorough sympathy with his Ministry, and with what was best in the nation. The Opposition, weakened and discredited, seemed day by day to be losing character, and to become more and more entangled in subversive and sentimental theories, which were above all things un-English. By an easy transition the blunders of the Whig Opposition were seen to spring from the crimes of the Whig Ministry, and to the shameful principles of the coalition were ascribed in logical sequence the doctrines

of Tom Paine, the drinking bouts of Sheridan, and the crimes of the Prince of Wales.

It is not too much to say that this atrocious character attributed to the coalition is an afterthought. There is no evidence to show that at the time it struck politicians in general as being specially heinous. It is true that severe remarks were made about it in the House of Commons, when it first took practical shape in the debate of the 17th of February. Severe remarks would of course always be made by opponents on any combination which seemed formidable. Fox answered them with excellent temper and a good deal of common sense.

"I come to take notice of the most heinous charge of all. I am accused of having formed a junction with a noble person whose principles I have been in the habit of opposing for the last seven years of my life. I see no reason for calling such a meeting an unnatural junction. It is neither wise nor noble to keep up animosity ties for ever. It is neither just nor candid to keep up animosity when the cause of it is no more It is not in my nature to bear malice or live in ill-will. *Amicitiæ sempiternæ, inamicitiæ placabiles.* I disdain to keep alive in my bosom the enmities which I may bear to men when the cause of those enmities is no more. When a man ceases to be what he was, when the opinions which made him obnoxious are changed, he then is no more my enemy but my friend. The American War was the cause of the enmity between the noble lord and myself: the American War and the American question is at an end. The noble lord has profited from fatal experience. When that system was maintained nothing could be more asunder than the noble lord and myself. But it is now no more, and it is therefore wise and candid to put an end also to the ill-will, the animosity, the rancour and the feuds which it occasioned."

And again a few days later:—

"It is only from the coalition of parties for the honest purpose of opposing measures so destructive to the interests of the country, that the spirit of constitutional power can ever be restored to its former vigour. It becomes men to forget private resentments when the cause of the nation calls so immediately for public unanimity. It is only a coalition that can restore the shattered system of administration to its proper tone

of vigorous exertion. By this means we shall regain the lost confidence of the people, and it is only that confidence that can give effect to the springs of government."

These arguments had their due effect both in the House and outside. There seems to have been during the first few months of the Coalition Government no attempt, either in Parliament or in the country, to stigmatise it as an unprincipled thing outside ordinary political morality. The opposition to it on the score of its strange and unnatural character died quickly away even among the partisans of Shelburne, and the King soon remained the only man in great position who continued to hold that view of it. And if we come to look closely into it, it must necessarily have been so. Some coalition was certain. There was nothing, now the American War was over, in the political opinions of Fox and North at that time, to make a coalition between them more unnatural than one between Shelburne and North. There was not nearly so much difference of opinion as existed between Fox and Shelburne, yet an agreement between those statesmen would have seemed natural enough to every one, and had been approved of by the King. Besides, Fox and North were not the only two people concerned. Their supporters were not mere machines who turned their coats at their bidding. No one has ever dared even to murmur a charge of want of principle against the political career of the Duke of Portland or of Lord John Cavendish. Their honour is above reproach. They had just given a proof of it by insisting on retiring from the Cabinet with Fox, rather than serve under a statesman whom they distrusted, though, unlike Fox, they had had no personal quarrel with Shelburne. Against Keppel the case would be even stronger, for Keppel had been personally wronged by North's Ministry, yet Keppel was

willing to forget the past. It is impossible seriously to maintain that one hundred and twenty Tories and ninety Whigs agreed to prostitute their political honour for the greed of place at the bidding of two unprincipled leaders. The real charge against Fox is not that he coalesced with North, but that he coalesced with North after having for so many years accused him of conduct almost criminal. It is not the coalition that is unnatural and unprincipled, but Fox who is unprincipled for joining the coalition. The dilemma shapes itself this way. When Fox accused North of public perfidy and unexampled treachery, when in 1779 he denounced the idea of union with him as abominable, scandalous, and disgraceful, an alliance with disgrace and ruin, with the worst enemies of England, he either believed what he said or he did not. If he did, it was clearly unprincipled conduct on his part to join an alliance which he himself admitted to be scandalous; if he did not, he was equally guilty in stirring up public passion by attacks on men which he did not believe to be true. To some extent undoubtedly the dilemma holds. In the days when men spoke to the House of Commons and not to the nation outside, the temptation was very great to use strong and unqualified language. Every one did it himself and every one expected it in others. It was a pity to lose a rhetorical effect by precision of language, when every one understood what was said in a Pickwickian sense. Fox, with his impetuous temperament, his brilliant imagination, and rapid utterance, was no more likely to check the rush of his eloquence by an anxiety not to exaggerate, than a jockey at a close finish would refuse to use his spurs for fear of punishing his horse. He was perpetually in exaggeration, and to that extent must bear the blame of want of principle. Men who now sit down and read his fiery invective in cold blood, naturally

wonder how he could ever forget, or North condone. Men who were present and saw the sunny boisterous temperament lash itself into quick anger and be carried away in a whirlwind of ungovernable rage, could easily understand how soon the impression would pass from his placable heart with the cause which produced it, and warm-hearted friendship resume her reign, as the genial sun bursts out after a summer storm.

If the coalition was not dishonourable and disgraceful to the two chief parties concerned, it certainly was not disadvantageous to the nation. The arguments of Fox on that point are unanswerable. During twenty-three years there had been no less than ten different Administrations. The old Whig phalanx had become so hopelessly disintegrated that it was quite impossible to find a leader who could command a solid majority. The Tories, broken as they were by the American War, would no longer rally to the discredited standard of North. Shelburne had become in a year so unpopular with all parties that his retirement was the only thing absolutely certain in English politics. A strong Government was essential to England's welfare, and a coalition between Fox and North afforded the best chance of establishing a strong Government. And to the Whig party the coalition promised to be no less advantageous than to the nation. A few staunch Whigs, like the Duke of Richmond, stood apart. He had put his name, he said, to too many protests against North to feel comfortable in his company. A few of the older race of Whigs, who had once followed Chatham, like the Duke of Grafton and Lord Camden, refused to join, but the younger men and the able men followed Fox. From a party point of view they were undoubtedly right. The party might be called a coalition party, the policy might to some extent

be a coalition policy, but the Ministry was a Whig Ministry pure and simple. Lord North was the only Cabinet Minister not a Whig. Much might be said from the Tory side of the impolicy of coalescing with the Whigs on terms which surrendered everything and received nothing. Deliverance from a worse coalition was but cold comfort to a Tory, who was called upon by party obligations to vote steadily to keep the Whigs in office. Fox certainly was not liable to the charge of having made a bad bargain for his party. Men's minds went naturally back a few years, and remembered how, at a great crisis of the country's history, a Coalition Ministry, which had been formed under circumstances by no means unlike the present, had raised England to a height of fame greater than she had ever experienced before. They fondly hoped that history would repeat itself. If Chatham could fairly boast that he had borrowed Newcastle's majority in 1757 in order to govern the country, with even greater justice could Fox boast, in 1783, that he had borrowed North's majority to establish the ascendency of the Whigs.

Yet the Coalition Ministry was a fatal political blunder, and wrecked the fortunes of the Whig party. There was one element left out of the calculation, and that vitiated the whole. No fairy left unasked to a wedding-banquet ever revenged herself more speedily and more fatally than did George III. on the coalition politicians who had neglected him. Many circumstances combined to make the King implacable. The shuffling of the political cards behind his back, and without his knowledge or consent, was peculiarly distasteful to him. He saw himself treated as if he were already King of the Mahrattas. He had resented the way in which Portland was put forward in 1782, and now Portland was being

actually forced on him against his will. He hated Fox, and looked upon him as an enemy to his throne, and chief among the corrupters of his son's morals and politics. But the cruellest stroke of all was the stab which Lord North gave him from behind. *Et tu Brute!* Lord North had been his chosen servant, his friend more than his Minister, on whom he had lavished all the tenderness and thoughtfulness of which his nature was capable, and now Lord North was in the ranks of his enemies, and aspiring to be Peishwa over him. Often had George III. been obliged to accept a Minister who was personally distasteful to him. He always fought to the last against him, but when he had given way he treated him fairly and openly. He looked upon the Coalition Ministers in a totally different light. They were a set of political sharpers who were not fit to be treated as gentlemen. He never attempted to conceal his opinion of them. At his levées he would hardly speak to them. In his first letter to Shelburne, after the vote condemning the peace, he lamented that it was his lot to reign in the most profligate age. To Lord Temple he called it "the most unprincipled coalition the annals of this or any other nation can equal," and spoke of his own attitude towards his new Cabinet in most unmistakeable terms:—

"A Ministry which I have avowedly attempted to avoid by calling on every other description of men, cannot be supposed to have either my favour or my confidence; and as such I shall most certainly refuse any honours they may ask for. I trust the eyes of the nation may soon be opened, as my sorrow may prove fatal to my health if I remain long in this thraldom. I trust you will be steady in your attachment to me, and ready to join other honest men in watching the conduct of this unnatural combination, and I hope many months will not elapse before the Grenvilles, the Pitts, and other men of abilities and character will relieve me from a situation which nothing could have compelled me to submit to but the supposition that no other means remained of preventing the public finances from being materially affected."

It is abundantly evident from this letter that the King regarded his Ministers not merely with dislike, but with rancorous hostility. He never intended to deal fairly with them. He looked on their existence as a tyranny to which he only submitted under press of bankruptcy, which he would throw off directly he had the opportunity. This was a factor in the political problem which the Ministers had never taken into consideration. They were prepared to fight openly with Shelburne or with Pitt, they were prepared to endure uncomplainingly the aversion of the King, but to have to defend themselves day by day and hour by hour against the secret intrigues and underhand plots of their nominal master, was to plunge them into a contest in which sooner or later they were bound to receive a fall. "Nothing," said Fox himself of the coalition, "but success can justify it." Unfortunately for him the attitude of the King made success impossible.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE INDIA BILL.

THE summer of 1783 was spent by Fox, with the assistance of Burke, in preparing the bill for the better government of the Indian possessions of Great Britain, upon which the Coalition Ministry had chosen to stand or fall. Fox was fully aware of the difficulty of the task which he had undertaken, and indeed it is not untrue to say that he had undertaken it because of its difficulty. In a letter to Lord Northington, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, written in November, 1783, he says:—

"Our Indian measure will come on soon after the meeting. It will be a vigorous and hazardous one, and if we get that well over I have very little apprehension about anything else here."

And a few days later he says again:—

"Our Indian business, upon which all depends, comes on Tuesday: the great contest about it on the second reading will in my opinion be the most important question to us that is ever likely to come on."

He did not therefore conceal from himself the risk which he was running. Political cowardice was never among his faults, though perhaps his friends might sometimes almost wish that it was. In an attack upon an old-established and wealthy corporation like the East India Company, he was certain to alienate many powerful

interests, to enable the different sections of his enemies to find a common ground of opposition, and to give the King an opportunity for the exercise of personal influence if he was disposed to make use of it. Fox was well aware of all this, but he was not the man to hesitate to put his fate to the touch, and win or lose it all. His whole heart was stirred by the reports which had been laid before Parliament of the rapacity of English officials, and the wrong done to unoffending natives. The pure love of humanity, always among the noblest of his qualities, burned with as intense a flame for the ryot of Bengal or of Oude, as for the negro of Africa, or for the serf of France. He could not endure the thought that the rule of England should seem to the educated Hindoo a return to barbarism and brutality, the victory of might over right.

But it was not only philanthropy which urged Fox to stake the fortunes of the Ministry upon the Indian question. Statesmanship undertook what humanity prompted. A great success was necessary to quiet the cavillings of opponents, to obliterate the remembrance of the past, and to give to England that steady and firm government which was the best, and to many minds the only, justification of the coalition. The Ministry were secure of their majority in the House of Commons, they were by no means sure of a majority in the constituencies, if the weight of the Court influence was to be thrown into the opposite scale. The Indian question had been before Parliament again and again. The proceedings of Warren Hastings, his dissensions with the Council at Calcutta, the repudiation of his policy by the Directors at home, its support by the Proprietors, had been for years the common talk of political society, and a fruitful topic of parliamentary criticism. In 1781, an inquiry into the govern-

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ment of India had been authorised by Parliament, and the report of the committee had been strongly condemnatory of the Governor-General. Before the recess of 1783, just after the Coalition Ministry had assumed the responsibilities of office, Dundas had actually brought into the House of Commons a bill for the appointment of Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General with the unlimited powers of a dictator. After this it would be a distinct confession of weakness on the part of the Ministry if they avoided the question; while if they succeeded in solving it to the satisfaction of the country and of their supporters, a long period of office seemed assured to them. The prospect was an enticing one. Fox had never yet been appalled by the bigness of a stake, nor was he the man to be turned from the path of glory because it was also the path of danger.

From a dramatic point of view the India Bill, and the events which succeeded it, form the crisis in Fox's life and political career. It is his one great effort at constructive statesmanship, his one great opportunity, not merely of destroying a vicious system, but of constructing a method of government for thirty millions of people which should be just, humane, and workable. It was a problem which demanded the highest gifts of statesmanship, the insight which could look fearlessly and safely into the future, the sympathy which could understand the thoughts and feelings of people different in race, in religion, and in temperament from Englishmen, and the wisdom which could combine what was rightly due to them with the just claims of a conquering and dominant nation on the other side of the world. Fox threw himself into his task with characteristic self-surrender. He discarded the suggestions of political prudence as unworthy of the cause. He refused to compromise and

impair the perfection of his scheme by concession to ignorance or prejudice at home. He could not bear to think that the welfare of India should be affected by the danger of losing a few corrupt votes at a parliamentary division; and he produced eventually a scheme which posterity has agreed to admire and which contemporaries united to denounce.

The principles of Fox's bill are principles which, when carried out in later time, have given to the people of India the only just government which they have ever known. They are principles which, when enunciated by Fox, seemed to educated England to be the corrupt offspring of the meanest party spirit. To us the constant supervision of Parliament, however liable in detail to abuse, seems the best conceivable check upon Ministerial maladministration. To the nation in the days of Fox Parliament meant the chosen field of Ministerial influence; its supervision was a farce, its patronage corruption. To increase the powers of the representatives of the people was but a well-sounding phrase for throwing power into the hands of the Minister. It was the unrepresentative character of Parliament which was the real cause of the mischief. People must first learn to trust Parliament itself before they will trust its nominees. They were far more willing to hand over all power to a dictator like Lord Cornwallis, whose character was their guarantee, than entrust a share of it to a House of Commons, which too often meant a majority, nominated by peers and nabobs, returned by secret service money, and kept together by sinecures and pensions. Fox, in so many things below the moral standard of his age, was in his belief in Parliament above it. He looked forward to the time when, by the passing of the imminent measure of parliamentary reform, the House of Commons should be

emancipated. His countrymen looked back to the last election, when even George III. was aghast at the money which had been spent. The mistake was a fatal one. He was sure of the House of Commons, for the coalition majority was unimpaired. The House of Lords might be with him, for party ties were still strong; but if any untoward accident happened, and he was forced to the arbitrament of the constituencies, his success would mainly depend upon the way in which the question came before the electors, and management 'was Fox's weak point.

On the 18th of November Fox introduced his scheme. It was divided into two parts. By the first bill the existing authority of the East India Company was superseded by a Board of seven Commissioners, in whom absolute control over the patronage and government of India was vested. Under them another Board of eight Assistant Councillors was formed to administer and regulate the commercial affairs of the Company. The seven Commissioners were at first to hold office only for four years, and to be appointed by Parliament. If the Act proved a success in practice, after the expiration of the four years they were to be appointed by the Crown. The Assistant Councillors were also in the first instance to be appointed by Parliament, but future vacancies were to be filled up by the Court of Proprietors. The Commissioners were to sit in England under the eye of Parliament. All business transacted by them was to be entered in books open to the inspection of Parliament, and all difference of opinion, which might arise between them and the Governor-General or other authorities in India, and especially any act of disobedience to orders from home committed by the Indian officials, were to be made the subject of careful minutes on both sides, so that

Parliament might have before it all the materials necessary for an independent judgment. By the second bill, which hardly survived its birth, minute and harassing restrictions were imposed upon the free action of the Governor-General, both in commerce and in politics, which were intended to guard against abuse of power and over-ambitious schemes, by bringing them rigidly under the control of the home authorities.

The plan of Fox and Burke, therefore, depended upon two great principles: (1) That India was to be governed from England; (2) That the guarantee for its good government was to be found in parliamentary control. India was to be brought within the pale of the English Constitution. Responsibility for the well-being of thirty millions of people was too great to be lodged anywhere but in the Crown and its responsible advisers. The same power that checked the insidious influence of a George III. in England, and punished the oppression of a Strafford in Ireland, or the corruption of a Trevor even in the Speaker's chair, was to extend a watchful eye as far as the distant plains of Bengal. Parliament in the eyes of Fox, like Magna Carta in the eyes of Coke, was "such a fellow that he will have no sovereign." True! India was not to follow humbly in the wake of English party politics. Continuity in administration, so desirable for a distant dependency, so essential for an Eastern community, was carefully preserved. The Commissioners were not to be the sport of party majorities in England, and change with every Ministry as the Secretary for India does now; but when parliamentary control was fully established, when each vacancy on the Board as it occurred was filled up by the Crown on the advice of the Prime Minister of the day, English party politics could not fail to make themselves clearly, though indirectly, felt

in the government of India, and India could not afford to disregard her common interests in the political problems of England.

A scheme so broad and so far-seeing, almost disarms criticism by its attractiveness; yet it was clearly a scheme for the future rather than for the present, for the nineteenth century rather than for the eighteenth. It would almost seem as if the vivid and prophetic imagination of Burke already saw the thin dark line of the electric telegraph binding together England and India in quick and close embrace, as if his ears already caught the thud of the steam engine amid the deserts of Suez. Not many years before he had denounced the folly of attempting to coerce a nation three thousand miles away. He was now attempting to bind down by parliamentary inquiry and legislative restriction the ruler of an empire on the other side of the world. Restrictive checks such as Parliament can impose or exercise are only useful when they can be promptly enforced. They are valuable to prevent, they are useless to cure, they are often dangerous to punish. They must be both useless and dangerous when they can only act a year after the occasion for action has arisen. Men who have the stuff in them to build up an empire are not the men to be bound down by legislative restrictions, or deterred by the fear of parliamentary inquiry. In modern days the conditions are precisely reversed to what they were in 1783. The business of Indian administrators is to defend an empire, not to create it, and the will of Parliament is known at Calcutta almost before it has been declared in London, yet even in modern days the wisest statesmen of England have been willing to give a generous confidence to the Viceroy whom they have carefully chosen.

In 1783 Indian affairs were in a state of transition.

Our power in India was but half developed, our administration most imperfect, our knowledge of the country very limited. We had but just escaped by the talents, and partly it must be admitted by the unscrupulousness, of Warren Hastings from total ruin. Grave dangers from Mysore, from the Mahrattas, and from the French, still threatened our ascendency. How could these dangers possibly be adequately met by a Board of English politicians in London? Mr. Pitt's India Bill was not so comprehensive, not so far-sighted a scheme as that of Fox and Burke, but it possessed the great merits of being suited to the circumstance of the time. It was transitional in its nature, and it dealt with a power in a state of transition. Corruption and oppression in India were to be suppressed, not by the vigilance of an English Parliament, possibly equally corrupt and unjust, but by the high character and unremitting efforts of the great officials sent out to assume the reins of government. Pitt's India Bill was twice modified in the ten years which elapsed from its passing, and each time in the direction of placing greater confidence in the Governor-General; and it was in consequence of such a policy that England obtained the services of Lord Cornwallis and the Marquis Wellesley. Had Fox's bill passed into law, and by great good fortune Cornwallis and Wellesley accepted office in spite of it, can it be imagined that the restrictions which it contained would have lasted one moment beyond the time when they began to be felt? Would Cornwallis have drawn back from the conquest of Mysore, or Wellesley from the Treaty of Bassein for fear of parliamentary censure, or in deference to parliamentary restriction? When the crisis came, all considerations except those of the safety of the empire would have been scattered to the wind, and legislative restrictions, like

Samson's bonds, proved efficacious only while the strong man slept.

But this was not the reasoning which proved fatal to the bill. It was attacked, not from the high ground of the true relations between India and England, but from the lower ground of pure party policy. In order to put the government of India on right lines for all time, Fox had deliberately run the risk of wrecking his whole scheme by his too ostentatious disregard of the prejudices of the day. Never was any great scheme constructed since the days of parliamentary government with so little consideration for the necessities of parliamentary warfare. The strange inability to grasp the political responsibilities of the moment, and to combine them with statesmanlike schemes for the future, which is so astonishing in a practical and powerful debater like Fox, was never more apparent than in his India Bill. The coalition on which he relied was partly made up of men returned to Parliament by royal influence to support a royal Minister. The opposition which he had to dread was inspired by the King himself, and headed by men who had taken as their leading political principle the vindication of royal authority in administration. Yet Fox proposed to transfer the whole patronage of India for four years from the Company, not to the Crown as head of the State, but to Commissioners appointed by Parliament, that is, by himself and his majority. Such a provision could not fail to unite the whole Tory party, the whole of the Court party, and the whole of those interested not merely in the East India Company, but in any chartered company whatever, in the bitterest hostility to the measure. It raised grave doubts among those of his own supporters, who disliked wholesale interference with old-established institutions.

Again, the chief difficulty with which Fox had to

contend, next to the personal hostility of the King, was the suspicion in the minds of the nation that his coalition with North rested on no principle, and was dictated merely by greed of office. The King had diligently let it be known what he thought about the matter. The Opposition had not lost an opportunity of pressing their view upon the country during the recess. It is noticeable that the attack on the coalition as unprincipled and unnatural became much more virulent after the recess than it was before it. One member, with more passion than humour, fell into the delightful bathos of winding up a furious attack upon the Ministry by demanding that a starling should be placed in the House to remind members of the state of affairs by constantly repeating "Coalition, coalition, cursed coalition!" As a matter of parliamentary tactics, it was above all things important to the Ministry that their great measure should not be open to the charge of being corruptly designed to throw power and influence into their own hands, under cover of an hypocritical profession of concern for the sufferings of India. Yet Fox either carelessly or presumptuously ran his head straight into the trap which lay open before him. To those who were already somewhat doubtful of the honesty of the coalition, the proposal to vest the whole lucrative patronage of India in the hands of the Ministry for four years seemed an absolute confirmation of their worst fears. The revolutionary character of the India Bill illustrated the unprincipled character of the coalition. Men like Fox and Burke, in the cold shade of opposition, had declaimed against corruption with an intensity of moral earnestness which had convinced all men of their sincerity. Yet, when other chances of obtaining office seemed to fail, they had not scrupled to make terms of alliance with the man who above all others

was blackened with the stain of long years of parliamentary corruption. And now, when they had gained power by these doubtful means, they proposed to assume to themselves the whole patronage of India for four years! For what purpose had they thus deprived the East India Company of its chartered rights? For what purpose did they propose to deprive the Crown of its natural inheritance? What sort of use would Fox and North make of the influence thus greedily claimed? Was it to send out to India men of approved honesty and of high character, regardless of political connection and party advantages? or was it to use the patronage of India for binding together the party at home, for the reward of political service, for the satisfying of personal claims, for consolidating the power of the Ministry? Such were the thoughts which were stirring in the minds of men when Fox made public the names of the first seven Commissioners. At their head stood the respectable name of Lord Fitzwilliam, among them was the able and subtle brain of Sir Gilbert Elliot, but one and all they were essentially party men. They were the personal friends and the devoted adherents of the leaders of the coalition. What a lurid light was at once thrown upon the real designs of the Ministers! Here was the first act of this unlimited patronage. Who were the men chosen out of all England as most fit to become dictators of India? Men who had served the country well? who had proved themselves capable, just, and impartial administrators? men who had made the great problems of India their special study? On the contrary, men of whom nothing more was known than that they were personal friends of the Ministers, steady political adherents, and the owners of valuable votes. Like master like man. If Fox and North used their patronage purely for the furtherance

of party interests, it was perfectly certain that the Commissioners would follow in the same footsteps. Men saw rising before them the horrible spectre of a vast colossus of corruption, clasping both England and India in its foul embrace, under the shadow of which royal authority, and popular independence, and imperial development, alike must wither and decay in order that on its shoulders, sharing its crown of power, it might support in secure but despicable dignity its twin children of the coalition. Burke was seen to have turned his back upon a lifetime devoted to economical reform, Fox was proved after all to be but a chip of the old block, and men believed in the absolute truth of the current sarcasm that the bill was one to take away the crown from the head of George III. and put it upon that of Fox.

Nevertheless this wide extended distrust was more apparent without than within the walls of Parliament, and the bill would almost certainly have passed with substantial majorities in both Houses, had it not been for the extraordinary and unconstitutional action of the King. George III., following out his principle that he was not bound to give his confidence to Ministers who had been forced upon him against his will, had from the first openly declared that he would get rid of the coalition directly an opportunity offered, and had called upon the Grenvilles to come to his aid. The India Bill gave him the desired opportunity, and Lord Temple, the head of the Grenville family, came forward as his agent. On the 1st of December the critical division in the House of Commons gave the Ministers a majority of 114. On the same day Lord Temple and Lord Thurlow submitted a paper to the King in which they advised that every possible exertion should be made to throw out the bill in the House of Lords. On the 9th the bill was brought

up to the Lords, and the second reading was fixed for the 18th. In the meantime Lord Temple had an interview with the King, who authorised him in writing to say on his behalf to the peers, that he should consider every man who voted for the bill as his enemy. Called upon in this way by George III. to decide between himself and his Ministers, the majority of the Lords not unnaturally adhered to the King, and the bill was thrown out by a majority of 19. On the same evening the Ministers received an order from the King to deliver up their seals of office, and the Coalition Ministry came to an end.

The dismissal of the Ministry was by no means the end of the conflict. It was merely the first blow struck by the King in a long war. The real struggle was to come. Fox himself had fully expected some such sudden backfall, and looked on the prospect of fighting his way back into office again with zest as a soldier, and little misgiving as a general. Nor was he necessarily wrong. Bad generalship on his part and unexpected treachery on the part of the King had defeated him, but it was quite possible that good generalship might not only retrieve the past but establish him more firmly than ever for the future. So, with the good humour which distinguished him, he took his seat on the front Opposition bench and waited events, little dreaming that he would be there for nearly the rest of his life. On the 19th of December Pitt was appointed Prime Minister, and on the 22nd the House met again for business.

Unfortunately it at once became apparent that good generalship was a gift which the Opposition could not hope to enjoy as long as it remained under the leadership of Fox. It is almost incredible how deficient in insight into the state of affairs he showed himself to be. He was now in the zenith of his power as an orator. His special

strength in debate lay in his quickness in seizing and dealing with the real point at issue. In the management of a debate he rarely made a mistake, in the management of a political question he rarely avoided fatal blunders. He had had quite sufficient experience of office to learn that, in a system of parliamentary government, a politician must consider not only what is desirable but what is possible, and must make his policy coincide with the general good sense of the country. Yet through his love for abstract statesmanship or his personal predilections, he continually allowed himself to get into wholly false relations with the country. No great leader of modern times has been served so devotedly, and has been loved so passionately as was Fox, yet none has ever led his followers so often into positions where victory was only possible by a miracle. A general who fought all his battles on the model of Dettingen would soon cease to rank high among tacticians.

A glance at the state of political thought in Parliament and in the country at the time of the dismissal of the coalition will soon show how greatly Fox misconceived the position of affairs. In the House of Lords, as experience had just shown, distrust of the principles of the coalition, and deference to the wishes of the Crown, had become too strong for the ties of party, which are always weaker in an hereditary than in a representative chamber. The peers as a body were not likely to reverse their recent decision, except under strong pressure from the House of Commons, fortified by a fuller appreciation of the danger attaching to unconstitutional conduct such as that of George III. and Lord Temple.

The House of Commons was the stronghold of the Opposition. There Fox reigned supreme. A substantial majority followed his lead, and was not likely to be wanting

in fidelity to any policy which seemed to promise a speedy return to office. Yet any thinking man could easily see that it was not wise to stake too much upon the power and authority of the majority of the House of Commons. The House was nearly four years old. It had been elected towards the end of the American War, royal influence and corrupt practices had been freely resorted to, to procure a majority for the King and Lord North. That majority was obtained at a time when the general opinion of Englishmen was notoriously against the Crown. No one knew better than Fox how opposed to the national sentiments was the House of Commons of 1780. Why should it so greatly have changed its character in 1784? Of the majority which Fox and Lord North directed against Pitt, the larger part no doubt were staunch and true Whigs who had always followed the banners of Fox, whose fidelity was above suspicion; but the rest, whose presence was absolutely necessary on a division, were the followers of Lord North, returned by corrupt influence to support the King's Minister in 1780, who partly from allegiance and partly from desire of office had joined the coalition in 1783, but who found themselves in a false and uncongenial position when in 1784 they were called upon to fight their way back to power over the prostrate bodies of the King and Pitt. Their natural sympathies were with authority, and they were not prepared to take part in a Parliamentary Revolution.

In the nation itself much prejudice had been excited by the India bill; much sympathy was felt with the King, upon whose counsels a Ministry of so questionable a nature as the coalition had forced itself. Shocked by the coalition, startled by the sweeping changes of the India bill, men were not prepared at once to denounce the King and his boy Minister, and shout for the "buff

and blue." They held their judgment in suspense, distrustful of both parties, persuadable by either, but vaguely sensible that after all the King was the most honest man in the whole range of English political life.

If this was the state of public opinion, Fox's true policy was clear and distinct. He ought to have applied himself heart and soul to persuade the nation that he was in the right. Neither side could win without the active support of the people. The influence of the Crown and the deference of the peers could not by themselves prevail over the will of the House of Commons. The House of Commons by itself had not moral strength enough to stand against the power of the Crown and of the peers. The mutual war could at best only produce a deadlock. The nation alone held the key to the puzzle. If Fox had boldly claimed the nation on his side, welcomed an immediate appeal to the people, explained to them the real greatness of his Indian scheme, modified, if necessary, those parts most open to misconstruction, proceeded at once against Lord Temple in Parliament for his unconstitutional conduct, and denounced to the nation the sinister revival of the personal interference of the Crown with legislation in Parliament as subversive of true parliamentary liberty, he would probably have won the day. At any rate he would have had his case argued fairly on its merits before a tribunal of which, on his own principles, he was bound to approve. The policy which he actually adopted was the exact opposite. He determined to rely solely upon his majority in the House of Commons, and to force the will of the Commons upon the King. He showed the greatest dread of an appeal to the people, procured an address to the King against a dissolution on

the very first day on which the House met after the change of Ministry, and tried later to extort a promise from Pitt that he would not advise a dissolution. He suffered the extraordinary action of Lord Temple to go perfectly unchallenged, in the teeth of a resolution of the House passed while the India Bill was before the Lords, that to "report any opinion of His Majesty upon any bill in either House of Parliament, with a view to influence the votes of members, is a high crime and misdemeanour, and subversive of the constitution of this country."

Having thus let the agent whom he could punish go scot-free, he proceeded to attack the principal who was above his reach. There was hardly a speech of his in the spring of 1784 which was not directed against the secret influence of the Crown and the unconstitutional appointment of the Ministers. Thus he narrowed the issue as much as possible to a duel between himself and George III., in which Pitt stood forth as the defender of the Crown. He threw away the opportunity which the unconstitutional conduct of the King had given him, by himself taking the equally unconstitutional line of attempting to interfere with the undoubted prerogative of the Crown to dissolve Parliament. He threw away all the advantages which his position as leader of the popular party gave him, by insisting on defending the narrow rights of a majority in one House, and enabled his adversary to pose as the champion at once of King, Lords, and People. Naturally, therefore, as the struggle increased in violence, the nation began to declare itself more and more decidedly on the side of Pitt and the King. When the King took no notice of a vote of want of confidence, when Pitt did not resign, and George did not dismiss him, all that was left to Fox was to refuse supplies and make

government impossible. But that could only render certain the dreaded dissolution, and make the elections still more unfavourable. So, as time went on, Fox found himself in a more and more hopeless position. The memory of the King's unconstitutional act faded away in the light of his own unconstitutional conduct. The King, adopting his own view of the situation, entered the lists with him as a combatant, and refused to take any notice of his addresses and resolutions. The people, trusted by Pitt, distrusted by Fox, naturally turned to their friends. All that was left to Fox in the political sphere was to stop the supplies, and that he dared not do. A policy of protest and protest alone was doomed to failure. Even the mechanical majority on which he had relied, and for which he had sacrificed so much, began to desert him and melt away. At last the crash came. On the 8th of March, Fox carried a representation to the Crown by a majority of one only. This was the end of the Opposition. Dr. Johnson truly said that the question before the country was whether it would be ruled by the sceptre of George III. or by the tongue of Fox. On the 24th of March, the Parliament was dissolved, and Fox had the mortification of seeing one of the most powerful parties ever gathered together under a Minister hopelessly shattered to pieces by his own extraordinary blunders.

A shower of squibs and broadsides followed him in his discomfiture, for political wit never spares the unfortunate :—

"Dear Car, is it true
What I've long heard of you,
The man of the people they call you, they call you?
How comes it to pass
They're now grown so rash
At the critical moment to leave you, to leave you?

"Oh, that cursed India Bill!
Arrah, why not be still?
Enjoy a tight place, and be civil, be civil.
Had you carried it through,
O agh! that would just do,
Then their charters we'd pitch to the devil, the devil."

Others, not quite so good-tempered, pointed to the political catastrophe as the natural and appropriate reward of a career conspicuous for want of moral principle:—

"When first young Reynard came from France
He tried to bow, to dress, to dance,
But to succeed had little chance
The courtly dames among.
'Tis true, indeed, his wit hath charms,
But his grim phiz the point disarms,
And all were filled with dire alarms
At such a *beau garçon*,

"He left the fair, and took to dice,
At Brookes's they were not so nice,
But cleared his pockets in a trice,
Nor left a wreck behind.
Nay, some pretend he even lost
That little grace he had to boast,
And then resolved to seize some post
Where he might raise the wind.

"In politics he could not fail,
So set about it tooth and nail;
But here again his stars prevail,
Nor long the meteor shone.
His friends, if such deserve the name,
Still keep him at a losing game,
Bankrupt in fortune and in fame,
His day is almost done."

CHAPTER VII.

TEN YEARS OF OPPOSITION.

1783—1793.

THE pitched battle of 1784 ended, as most battles do, in the complete victory of the greatest tactician. When the new Parliament met on the 18th of May, Fox found himself at the head of a broken and dispirited party, which numbered little over a hundred members, face to face with a solid and triumphant body of some 250 Ministerialists, enthusiastic in their loyalty to the Crown and completely devoted to their young and skilful leader. Fox himself had only succeeded in obtaining the second place on the poll for Westminster, after the most unremitting efforts on his own part, backed by the charms of the Duchess of Devonshire and the open advocacy of the Prince of Wales. As it was, his enemies succeeded in preventing him taking his seat for Westminster for more than a year, by obtaining a scrutiny from the returning officer, pending which no return was made to the House of Commons of the result of the election. Fox, who had also been elected for Orkney, at once challenged the decision of the High Bailiff, and pointed out that by an act of his own will he had practically disenfranchised Westminster as long as the scrutiny lasted. Pitt, however,

from party motives supported the returning officer; and Fox, or rather Fox's friends, found themselves involved in a long, wearisome, and expensive inquiry which could have no other result than to waste money and embitter party feeling. At last, after nine months had elapsed, the House of Commons ordered progress to be reported, and it was found that the scrutiny was complete only in one parish, and that no material change in the position of parties had resulted from it. On this the majority became rather ashamed of their factiousness, and, although Pitt continued his opposition, the House, on the 5th of March, 1785, declared Fox duly returned for Westminster.

Such a beginning did not seem to promise any decline in party virulence, yet it was really but the last muttering of the thunderstorm as it passed away over the hills of time. The majority which supported Pitt was so ample and so homogeneous, and the verdict of the country, not merely upon the policy of Fox but on the whole coalition, so unmistakable, that all thought of changing the position of affairs speedily dropped out of the thoughts of politicians on both sides. Parliament settled down naturally and quietly to the transaction of business under the guidance of Pitt, without fear of any renewal of political convulsion. Fox himself, tired out in body and mind, was anxious to leave Parliament, and let the country take its chance without the help of an organised and active Opposition, while he pursued at St. Ann's what was to him the far more enjoyable and profitable employment of the critical study of the best classical and modern poetry. It was only the stern call of duty, and the urgent representations of his followers, which prevented him from anticipating in 1784 the secession of 1797. The reasons for this attitude of mind are not far to seek. It is always difficult for men,

almost impossible for politicians, to look with impartiality upon the withdrawal of distinguished men from posts of great responsibility. It seems to argue on the face of it a want of sense of duty, and of patriotism, if not serious defects of temper and of perseverance. The abdications of history are not reassuring. Diocletian, Charles V., and Christina are not the greater for their efforts at self-abnegation. Achilles sulking in his tents when the Trojans were at the ships is a picture on which every English schoolboy instinctively looks with contempt. And the instinct is right, because it springs from the conviction that a man cannot withdraw from the work of his life, while his powers are still unimpaired, without grave loss to himself and others.

But to Fox politics never appeared in this serious way as the work of his life. He was not a professional politician as Diocletian or Pitt were professional politicians. He was not even a professional Parliamentary soldier as Achilles was a professional military warrior. The accident of his birth had made him a politician. His extraordinary political gifts had made him a leader. His sporting instincts made him determine to be first in any race in which he was engaged. His real and strong sympathy for the oppressed, his burning love for liberty, urged him ever against his will to throw himself into the foremost place and fight stubbornly for office, because office meant the opportunity of advancing the cause of liberty. But in his heart of hearts these were after all but episodes, episodes which from time to time took up into themselves all the threads of his life's story, but which were still to him essentially episodes. His true life as he conceived it to himself was a life of lettered ease, of quiet domestic enjoyment. When he was young his real interests were at Newmarket and at Almack's, now in middle age they

were with Homer and at St. Ann's. He had by this time formed the permanent connection with Miss Blane, usually known as Mrs. Armistead, which afterwards ripened into marriage, and which shewed him the delights of domestic happiness. Half of his great political blunders came from either an inability or a disinclination to take the trouble to understand the game of politics, to find out what people were thinking about, to ponder carefully how prejudice might best be overcome and difficulties avoided. The work of the party manager was distasteful to him and scorned by him, for the simple reason that politics in themselves had no attractions for him, but only the ends which politics might serve, or the passing excitement of the political battle.

So it naturally happened, that when all possibility of carrying out the object which he desired passed away with the election of 1784, and all the excitement of the duel with the King was over, it seemed to him mere waste of time to keep up a hopeless opposition to Pitt and Dundas when he might be so much more profitably employed upon Homer and Ariosto. Had he been left to himself, the world would have seen no more of Fox as a politician after 1784, but knowledge would have been enriched by healthy and eminently sensible criticisms on the great poets of Greece and Italy, and possibly scholars might have been delighted by a treatise which would have set the question of the Digamma for ever at rest. But it was not to be. Fox, above all men, was the slave of his friends. He felt deeply what he owed to those who stood by him in adversity, and at their call he emerged from his seclusion at St. Ann's to oppose Pitt's best measures, and to bring renewed disgrace upon his party by his mismanagement of the question of the Regency.

The opportunities which attended Pitt on his entrance upon office, were such as a constitutional Minister rarely enjoys. For five years he was undisputed master of the country without any serious question to face except that of Regency. For nine years he was unhampered by war. Royal influence, which had proved so fatal to so many of his predecessors, from the very nature of things became extinct. He was the King's own choice. It was he that had won for George his victory. Respected by the King though not beloved, deferential though not subservient, self-reliant, self-controlled, incorruptible, he was at once too powerful and too useful to be dispensed with. Though George III. never gave him his full confidence, as he had given it to North, and afterwards gave it to Addington, he never caballed against him. The party of the King's friends insensibly passed into well-merited oblivion. Jenkinson their leader accepted a peerage at the hands of Pitt. The old cry of secret influence died away. Corruption, which can only really thrive when opinion is much divided and votes are precious, veiled her face and fled from the presence of a high-principled Minister and a united nation. The personal authority of the King in administration, so long the war cry of the Tory party, was indeed still acknowledged in word, but it ceased to mean much when it was constitutionally exercised through the Prime Minister. So it came about that Pitt was the strongest and most independent Minister whom England had had since the days of Walpole, and under him the doctrine of the Prime Ministership, which has done more than anything else to take political power out of the hands of the Crown, became finally established.

Besides these advantages of his political position, Pitt also enjoyed gifts of character and mind which peculiarly fitted him for the post he occupied. From his earliest

boyhood he had made the House of Commons his special study, and, at the age of twenty-five was a far greater master of the difficult art of directing that fastidious and critical assembly than many a veteran of fifty years' Parliamentary experience. It is said that, since the House of Commons became the chief factor in the government of England, there have been only five men who have thoroughly possessed its confidence as its leader, namely, Pym, Walpole, Pitt, Peel, and Disraeli, and of those Pitt stands out a head and shoulders above the rest. In the whole of his long Ministerial experience he never made a tactical mistake in parliamentary management. His oratory too was exactly suited to his position and to the times in which he lived. Gifted with a rich sonorous voice, and having at his command an extraordinary wealth of words, which seemed to shape themselves without art or premeditation into majestic periods, and found their natural completion in the appropriate Virgilian quotation; rising at times to powerful and stirring declamation, never sinking into vulgarity or colloquialism, he made his oratory exactly to correspond to the demands of the purest art form of the 18th century. To the House of Commons of those days, when one and all of the members were trained in the school of imitative classical taste, his speeches seemed perfect and flawless, formed on the best models, polished "usque ad unguem." To us they appear cold, stilted, and colourless, artificial in expression and unreal in feeling, "the glitter of the sunlight upon the snow" as has been well said, or rather perhaps like a Greek statue, perfect in form, graceful in outline, instinct with feeling, but wanting life.

These great gifts of parliamentary tact and oratory were directed to their proper channels of usefulness by a character the distinguishing mark of which was self-control;

and by a manner carefully adapted to maintain by a cold and distant address that ascendency which talent had gained. Pitt walked among mankind, pale, passionless, and lofty, "with his eye in the air;" only among his most intimate friends would he unbend. It is characteristic of him that, while in private life he was witty and agreeable, "the wittiest man I ever knew," said his intimate friend Rose, in public he never made or attempted to make a joke. His one failing was drunkenness, and that was to a great extent brought on by the necessity of stimulant to a frame physically weak, and to a nature overburdened with the cares of an empire. In the eyes of the eighteenth century it was a venial sin, and one which he shared with most of his contemporaries. Such a man as this lived but for one object, political ascendency. Having by great good fortune attained it at a very early period of his life, his whole energies were devoted to its maintenance. Regardless of office, he was greedy of power, he became morbidly timorous in any action which might tend to endanger his ascendency, was careful not to embark, if he could help it, on any policy which threatened to be unsafe, and drew back at once directly he encountered serious opposition. Thus he soon came always to take the line of the least pressure. In his legislation he was said to think much more of the Parliament, which was to pass the law, than of the country which was to be affected by it. His greatest failures came from a want of courage in risking his ascendency for what he believed to be a great national good. The very antithesis of Fox, he counted over and over again the cost of everything he said, and everything he proposd to do, and frequently allowed the golden moment for action to pass away while he was counting. If he had set himself in 1784 to deal boldly and comprehensively with

the great questions which were clamouring for settlement, —Parliamentary Reform, the Removal of Religious Disabilities, the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the Union with Ireland,—he would have saved England from the effects of a political convulsion which was dangerous only because it was delayed so long; he would have rescued her from the grave dangers which now threaten her political and social welfare, through the domination of a democracy mentally and politically uneducated; and he would have handed his name down to posterity as the greatest statesman as well as the greatest economist among the Ministers of the century. But questions such as these involved risk. They ran counter to powerful interests, they were certain to excite formidable opposition. So Pitt deliberately let slip his unique opportunity, and the most loyal majority Minister ever had was used to reform the customs duties, and establish a sinking fund, while the real wounds of the nation were festering undressed and unhealed.

One result of Pitt's careful and safe policy was a great diminution in the vigour of the Opposition. The economical measures passed by Pitt in 1784 and 1785 were thoroughly non-contentious in character, and, though open to criticism in details, were calculated greatly to benefit the finances of the country. Fox accordingly gave them his hearty support. He did not understand finance, he would not read Adam Smith, it was not therefore likely that he would vie with Pitt on financial or economical questions, or would be able to detect any fallacy in his reasoning about the Sinking Fund. The commercial treaty with France, by which a limited system of free trade was introduced, was the only question which brought the whole force of the Opposition to bear upon the Ministry. The scheme is Pitt's best title to fame as a

financial statesman. The idea was originally that of Shelburne, and was directly inspired by the writings of Adam Smith; but to Pitt belongs the credit of having adopted it, made it his own, and, with the able assistance of Eden as negotiator, carried it through. The speech of Pitt in introducing it was one of his greatest oratorical efforts, and was mainly directed to show the mutual benefit in commerce which both countries must infallibly receive. Fox, on the other hand, attacked it violently on political grounds. He declared that France was England's natural enemy, and it was only at England's expense that she could grow. Her object in the present treaty was merely to entangle England in her own system of politics, in order to neutralise opposition to her further political aggressions. Burke, Sheridan, Windham, and Grey (who made his maiden speech on this occasion) all reiterated the same complaints, and avowed their distrust of France. But, in spite of this appeal to national prejudice, the measure was passed by a majority of two to one, and the consumption of French wine in the country was at once nearly doubled, without any corresponding loss in the Portuguese trade.

The detestation of France which showed itself so strongly in the speeches of all the Whig leaders at this time, and especially in those of Burke and Fox, sounds somewhat strange in the mouth of a party which a few years later was specially to identify itself with the French nation, and to sacrifice much for the sake of France. The fact was, that in this, as in so many other questions, there was a great difference of view in the ranks of the Opposition, though as yet no difference of action. To the mind of Burke and the older school of Whigs, France itself appeared as the traditional enemy, resistance against whom had been the cardinal principle of Whig foreign

policy ever since the days of William III. Opposition to France was as sacred a duty as the support of the glorious Revolution. To Fox on the other hand, younger in years, and more practical and more sympathetic in mind, France was represented by her government, and was hateful, not because she was France, but because she was the greatest foe to liberty in Europe. Still, whatever the motive may have been, the union of the whole Whig party against the French treaty in 1785 shows how far behind their opponents they were at that time in appreciation of the directions in which the true liberty of a commercial nation can best influence the world.

During the two years which followed the passing of the French treaty, the public question in which Fox chiefly interested himself was the impeachment of Warren Hastings. For some time Burke had been deeply engaged in investigating the conduct of this remarkable man. Starting with a preconceived conviction of his guilt, he soon found enough to persuade himself that Hastings had not merely dishonoured the British name by his tyranny and extortion, but that he was himself the source and centre of all the misgovernment of India. The subject preoccupied Burke. It became almost a mania with him. He could think and speak of nothing else, and the more he talked the more Hastings dilated before his eyes as a monster of iniquity, in himself the incarnation of governmental wickedness. Fox and Sheridan approached the matter from rather a different standpoint. The sufferings of the people of India had ever been a subject which easily touched Fox's tender heart. All his strong humanitarian instincts were with them against their oppressors. He had lodged the power of control in the Parliament of England in his India Bill because he hoped thereby best to watch over the interests of the ryots. He did not, like Burke,

permit himself to be so carried away with passion as to be insensible to Hastings' real services to India and the country. He fully recognised that without him the British power in India must have sunk, but he thought that no amount of difficulties overcome, no amount of services rendered, could justify conduct in itself rapacious and unjust. Such arguments were merely a plea on a gigantic scale for doing evil that good might come ; and he thought that it would be a very useful lesson to teach both to the servants of the Company and to the natives, that no services however great, no station however high, could to the minds of Englishmen be considered as excuse for tyranny, or ward off the avenging stroke of offended justice.

But besides these considerations, founded on general principles of morality, it was not very difficult to see that an impeachment of Warren Hastings, if successfully carried out, would be of immense political advantage to the Opposition. It was an open secret that the King warmly espoused the cause of Hastings. It was whispered that he even wished to place him at the head of the Board of Control. An impeachment justly founded on strong evidence would therefore place Pitt on the horns of a dilemma. He must either surrender Hastings and forfeit the King's favour, or support Hastings and put himself in marked opposition to the moral sense of the country. Accordingly the Opposition mustered all their strength and carefully prepared their scheme. On the 17th of February, 1786, Burke moved for papers. On the 4th of April he produced articles of impeachment of Hastings for his conduct with regard to the Rohillas, the Rajah of Benares, and the Begums of Oude. Burke, Fox, and Sheridan respectively undertook the tasks of explaining these charges to the House.

Unfortunately a dilemma in politics is rarely more successful than a dilemma in argument, and Pitt found little difficulty in picking his way through the toils which his enemies had spun for him. When the Rohilla charge was brought before the House by Burke on the 1st of June, Dundas, Pitt's closest friend and the President of the Board of Control, took the lead in opposing the motion on the ground that, however blameworthy Hastings' conduct might have been, there was nothing on which to found a criminal charge. Fox strongly supported Burke, and described the whole transaction as the basest of bargains, to exterminate an inoffensive people for forty lacs of rupees; "for that sum," he cried, "the character, the dignity, the honour of the English nation were basely and treacherously exposed to sale." The House, however, took the other view, and threw out the motion by a majority of fifty-two. On the 13th of June Fox brought forward the Benares charge, and at the beginning of the following year Sheridan introduced that relating to Oude in his celebrated Begum speech, which has been pronounced by so many competent judges to be the finest display of eloquence ever listened to by the House of Commons. In both these matters Pitt, though not fully accepting the accounts of the Opposition, thought that there was enough disclosed on which to found an impeachment. He took a leading part in settling the articles which were to be laid before the Lords, and, having thus carefully avoided identifying himself with the doubtful acts of Hastings, was content to let the impeachment drag its weary length along, and absorb the energy of the Opposition, which otherwise would be devoted to his own policy. On the other hand, the King was wise enough to see that after all a long and wearisome investigation was the best way of avoiding any direct censure on Hastings,

and never withdrew from Pitt any of his confidence for the part which he had played.

But by far the gravest of the difficulties with which Fox had to contend during this part of his political life was his close connection with the Prince of Wales. A character so low, mean, and degraded has rarely tarnished the reputation of an English family. To find a parallel we must go to the brutalised courts of Germany, to the abandoned court of Louis XV., or to the barbarous court of Russia in the eighteenth century. Immorality, wastefulness, and folly were at that time the recognised privileges of princes of the blood. The Prince of Wales added to them the mean and unkingly vices of shamelessness and mendacity, while generous instincts and noble thoughts seemed as far from his character as the more vulgar feelings of filial or domestic affection.

It had become a sinister tradition in the House of Hanover for the heir to the throne to be in violent antagonism to his father. In the case of George III. and his son antagonism ripened into a hatred which neither side cared to attempt to conceal. The King, harsh and unsympathetic, looked upon every act of boyish independence as little better than rebellion. The Prince, dissolute and undutiful, took a malignant pleasure in outraging his father's prim respectability. Partly to annoy the King, partly because he had imbibed as real an affection for Fox as his shallow nature was capable of, he had from the first violently attached himself to the Whigs, became a member of Brookes's, wore their colours, voted for their measures, and celebrated the return of Fox for Westminster with rejoicings which were as indecent in a person of his position as they were uproarious. "There was not a more violent Foxite in the kingdom," wrote Lord Cornwallis in 1783.

Such conduct as this naturally did no small disservice to his friends. It is characteristic of Fox that he never seems to have pressed upon the Prince, perhaps he never fully realised, the harm which was being done to his party and to its leader. The secret of the King's rooted antipathy to the Whigs, of his personal enmity to Fox, is to be found mainly in the conduct of the Prince of Wales. Of course George III. was strongly opposed to the Whigs on political grounds. He would never, and he had never, accepted Whigs as his Ministers when he could help himself; but there is a distinct difference to be noted in his dealings with men like Chatham or Rockingham, and his conduct to Fox. Partly, no doubt, it is to be accounted for by the change in his own position. He was not so strong and not so experienced in the days of Chatham and Rockingham as he was in the days of Fox and the Duke of Portland. Partly it is to be explained by the greater boldness of Fox's views; but, after making all allowances for considerations such as these, there remains behind a vast fund of suspicion and prejudice which is only explicable on the grounds of a deep moral hatred. George III. looked on Fox not merely as a wrong-headed and unprincipled politician, but as the preacher and the teacher of evil, a Mephistopheles who had set himself to corrupt the morals and ruin the character of his son; who, having succeeded only too well, had carried him off in triumph to head the party of revolution against the Church and the throne.

Nor was this view, distorted and one-sided as it was, wholly without foundation. The Prince's character was not one which required a Mephistopheles to ruin it. There was not much of it left by the time he was out of the nursery. But Fox, if not his leader, had certainly been his companion in many a scene of dissipation while the

Prince was yet a boy. The coterie of young Whig lords by whom the Prince was surrounded, and whose ill-timed jests and bets upon the succession rankled so deeply in the heart of the King, were the devoted adherents of Fox. His was the one influence which the Prince, on emerging into manhood, willingly owned. He was the only man in England who could have checked the headlong torrent of extravagance and vice. Yet his influence, though sometimes exerted for the public good, seems never to have been used in purely private matters. Fox was content to allow the Prince the same liberty which he himself had enjoyed; and so it happened that the want of moral sense, so conspicuous throughout his whole career, forced him to throw away the opportunity which he, and he alone, could utilise. How could he, with his past history of debt and of gambling, with his present history of carelessness and immorality, play the part of Mentor? His own vices rose up in judgment against him, and prevented him from using the only means which could have reconciled the King to the Whigs, and paved the way for his own return to office. "Ah que l'immoralité de ma jeunesse a fait de tort à la chose publique," was the exclamation of the despairing Mirabeau in similar circumstances, and Fox, if he ever permitted himself to reflect upon the connection between morals and politics, must often have been tempted to re-echo the cry.

Ever since he was eighteen the Prince had always been under the influence of women. Usually each connection that he formed proved as evanescent as it was discreditable. But in 1784 he fell seriously and, as he thought permanently, in love with Mrs. Fitzherbert, a young widow of 28, with considerable personal attractions, but a Roman Catholic by religion. Mrs. Fitzherbert at first was naturally rather alarmed than flattered by her

conquest. Nothing daunted, however, by her coyness, the Prince proceeded to lay siege to the fortress by every contrivance known to the hero of a melodrama. He made vows and protestations, he cried by the hour, he rolled on the floor, he tore his hair, he wrote appalling love-letters thirty-seven pages long, he went into hysterics, he swore to give up his crown and his country, and even descended to the mean trick of an affected suicide. It is not often that a Prince has to push his suit to such lengths. When a year had elapsed, and his passion still seemed to remain as constant as ever, Mrs. Fitzherbert could hold out no longer. In December, 1785, she returned to England from her sanctuary abroad, and on the 21st of the same month the two were married by an English clergyman in the presence of at least six witnesses.

The step was one of serious political importance. By the Royal Marriage Act the marriage was invalid, as the previous consent of the Crown had not been obtained, and the Prince was under twenty-five years of age; but it was exceedingly doubtful whether this disability would be held to exempt him from the penalties of the Act of Settlement, by which marriage with a Roman Catholic forfeited the succession to the Crown. The doubt was so grave that Fox thought it his duty to interfere. In a long and carefully worded letter, written ten days before the marriage, he pointed out in terms of respectful affection the seriousness of the issues at stake both to the Prince and to the nation. He was answered in a few jaunty lines absolutely denying the truth of the rumours "so malevolently circulated." Ten days after this distinct denial, the marriage was celebrated, but kept secret from Fox. It was impossible, however, to keep it secret very long from the world. Early in 1786 the bailiffs were in possession of Carlton House. The

King refused to authorise his Ministers to make any application to Parliament for his son's assistance. The Opposition took the matter up, and in April, 1787, Alderman Newnham gave notice of a motion for the payment of the Prince's debts. During the year the rumours of his marriage had been growing more and more persistent. Many of the Opposition leaders, partly on that account, were opposed to any application to Parliament at all. The Duke of Portland had such a stormy interview with the Prince that Burke thought that the party would break up. Rolle, the hero of the Rolliad, took up the cudgels for the Tories, and openly intimated that the proposal if pressed would involve questions by which the "constitution both in Church and State would be affected."

On this Fox saw that some explanation was absolutely necessary. He had an interview with the Prince, and on the next day, speaking on his behalf, and having as he avowed "direct authority for what he said," told the House of Commons that "the Prince was willing to give His Majesty and His Majesty's Ministers the fullest assurances of the utter falsehood of the fact in question, which never had, and which common sense must see never could have, happened." In consequence of this explicit statement, the House voted £161,000 for the payment of existing debts, and an addition was made by the King to the Prince's allowance. On the morning following Fox's statement, the Prince went up to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and, taking her hands in his, said, "Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife." On the same evening a gentleman said to Fox at Brookes's, "I see, Mr. Fox, by the papers, you have denied the fact of the marriage of the Prince with

Mrs. Fitzherbert. You have been misinformed. I was present at that marriage."

A story more incredibly base could not be found in the whole range of fiction. It was bad enough that a man of position and education should solemnly deny his approaching marriage ten days before the ceremony took place. That after he had been married more than a year, he should instruct his friend publicly to brand his wife's honour in the House of Commons, in order that, as the price of her assumed shame, he might procure the payment of his own debts, shows an extent of moral obliquity but little better than that of a father who lives on the proceeds of his daughter's prostitution. After an act of such vileness as this, his attempt to throw over Fox, when he had made all the use of him that he could, seems comparatively trifling, yet that violated the rules of social honour no less than the other did those of domestic faith. Fox himself had the rare courage to hold his tongue, and not to make matters worse by publishing the gross deception of which he had been made the victim, but the relations between the two could, of course, never again be the same. For a year he absolutely refused to have any dealings at all with the Prince, but after that time the necessities of party warfare, and his own easy standard of morality, paved the way for a reconciliation. They became once more political allies, but never again intimate friends.

In the spring of 1788, Fox found himself able to carry out a long-meditated tour in Switzerland and Italy. As was usual with him, he abandoned himself wholly to the delights of travel, banished all thoughts of politics, never looked at an English paper except to see the result of a race at Newmarket, and promised himself a long spell of unalloyed happiness in the art galleries of Italy. The

dream, however, was quickly dispelled. He had only got as far as Bologna on his way south, when he was summoned home as quickly as he could travel by the news of the alarming illness of the King; and he had to tear himself from the society of Guido Reni and the Caracci—whom, strange to say, he greatly admired—in order to plunge headlong into the keenest party fight which had occurred since 1784.

For some months it had been evident to those about the Court that the King's mind was slightly impaired, but it was hoped that quiet and rest would enable him to recover without drawing public attention to the matter. At the beginning of November, however, his affection took a serious turn for the worse. He completely lost his reason, became violent and depressed by turns, and was seized by a sharp attack of fever which placed his life for some days in danger. Parliament was summoned to meet on the 20th, and it was clear that on its assembling immediate measures would have to be taken for conducting the affairs of the country during the incapacity of the Crown. To an ordinary observer the difficulty did not seem to be a serious one. The Queen was the natural person to take charge of the King, and the Prince, now of full age, to succeed to the Regency. All politicians, however, knew that the matter was not so simple as it looked. It was thought at that time that the King's incapacity was certain to last for months and probably for years. It was certain that the first act of the Regent would be to dismiss Pitt from office and recall the leaders of the hated coalition. Men saw with horror the prospect open out before them of a renewal of the party fight of 1784 with the conditions reversed. They found themselves suddenly face to face with a minority Ministry, resting wholly on royal support, bidding frantically for

the votes of the constituencies, as their only safeguard against the vengeance of the King, should his reason return.

So over the stricken mind of George III., as of old over the dead body of Patroclus, swayed the faction fight. It is a melancholy chapter of English history. Not one of those who took a leading part in the question came out of it with increased reputation. The Prince and the Duke of York showed an indecent haste to seize upon the King's papers, and a desire to oust the Queen from the guardianship of his person. They were believed openly to exult in the prospect of reversing his most cherished policy, and ejecting his chosen Minister. When the King lay, as it was thought, dying, they were dancing, gambling, and drinking. The Queen, zealous in the extreme of her rights over the King's person, resented any interference on the part of the Princes with an acrimony which bordered on insult, deliberately denied them information, and on the King's recovery, poisoned his mind against them. Pitt, ever stately and dignified, wasted time deliberately in the hope of the King's recovery, and embittered opposition by the needless and ungenerous restrictions which he sought to place upon the Regent. The Opposition completely lost their heads on the sudden prospect of a return to power. They threw to the winds all respect and thought for the terrible blow which had fallen upon the head of the State. They took a pleasure in magnifying his infirmities. They prophesied the impossibility of his recovery. Burke especially was so carried away that he almost gloated over his sufferings. Fox and the Duke of Portland settled their Cabinet, and, it was said, allotted their patronage before the Regency was an accomplished fact.

On all sides mismanagement was rife, but Fox was

chiefly responsible for the blow sustained by his own party. His want of parliamentary tact again put the game into his adversary's hands. Parliament met on the 20th of November, and on December 8th the Commons examined the King's physicians as to the state of his health, and drew up a report. On the 10th, Pitt, in consequence of the report, moved that a committee should be appointed to search for precedents, with a view of laying a foundation for a Regency Bill, which he proposed to introduce. Fox, who had been in England more than a fortnight, and had had ample opportunity of consulting his friends, strongly protested against the adoption of this course.

"It is sheer loss of time to search for precedents," he said. "The circumstances to be provided for does not depend upon our deliberations as a House of Parliament. It rests elsewhere. There is now a person in the kingdom different from any other person that existing precedents can refer to, an heir-apparent of full age and capacity to exercise the royal power. In my firm opinion the Prince of Wales has as clear as express a right to assume the reins of government, and exercise the powers of sovereignty, during the continuance of the illness and incapacity with which it has pleased God to afflict His Majesty, as in the case of His Majesty's having undergone a natural and perfect demise. As to this right which I conceive the Prince of Wales to have, he himself is not to judge when he is entitled to exercise it, but the two Houses of Parliament, as the organs of the nation, are alone qualified to pronounce when the Prince ought to take possession of and exercise this right."

The joy of the Ministerial party when they heard this clear enunciation of the doctrine of hereditary, as against parliamentary, right from the lips of the Whig leader can easily be imagined. "I'll unwhig the gentleman," cried Pitt as Fox was speaking, "for the rest of his life."

'Of the momentous business opened last night," wrote Sir William Young to the Marquis of Buckingham, "I can only say that our astonishment is only equalled by the spirits we are in, on viewing the grounds Mr. Fox has abandoned to us and left our own. Talbot, who made one of my morning's levée, told me that at White's last night all was hurra and triumph."

Pitt seized the opportunity with masterly skill. Once more the blunders of his rival had enabled him to stand forth in the eyes of the world as the champion of the King and the Constitution. Turning upon Fox, he denounced the doctrine he had just heard as treason to the Constitution, a reassertion of the exploded doctrine of indefeasible right. In vain Fox tried to explain away his words, to induce the House to leave abstract questions alone, and proceed to practical matters. Pitt fully understood his advantage and meant to press it. Fox, he said, had deliberately raised the question of abstract right. He had claimed for the Prince a vested right to the Regency. It was impossible to stir a step until the question of right was determined, for it touched the very vitals of the Constitution. A few days afterwards Sheridan added fuel to the flame by reminding the House of the danger of provoking the Prince to assert his right. The effect was instantaneous. "During the whole time that I have sat in Parliament," writes W. Grenville to his brother, "I never remember such an uproar as was raised by his threatening." Visions of the days of Charles I. floated before the members' eyes. Parliament was being openly defied and threatened. The principles of Divine right, and of the indefeasible authority of princes, seemed again to rear themselves from their slumber, and place the liberties of Englishmen once more in jeopardy. Well might Grenville say in another letter:—

"Only think of Fox's want of judgment, to bring himself and his friends into such a scrape as he has done by maintaining a doctrine of higher Tory principle than could have been found anywhere since Sir Robert Sawyer's speeches."

Never was Pitt's singular parliamentary ability so evident as in his management of the Regency question.

His was the worst case to argue from the point of view of constitutional law, but Fox, with his usual carelessness, had used words which were easily capable of being interpreted in an unconstitutional sense. Pitt immediately fastened this meaning upon them, and from that moment all attempts to explain appeared as attempts to explain away. To us there cannot help being something ludicrous in the picture of Fox and Sheridan standing in the pillory of public opinion with Atterbury and Sacheverell as the apostles of Divine right. We wonder that Parliament did not at once see the joke and sweep the cobweb away with a hearty peal of laughter. But to men of that day the danger to the Constitution seemed serious enough. The tarnished character of the Prince of Wales, and the distrust so generally felt in Fox since the coalition, made men unwilling to entrust to their keeping the full powers of sovereignty, and afraid of acknowledging a principle which seemed to put them outside the sphere of parliamentary control.

As a matter of policy Pitt was undoubtedly right. It was better under the circumstances to disregard constitutional logic. It was wiser to confer the Regency on the Prince, and to restrict his powers by Act of Parliament, although such a course necessitated the creation of a phantom King, than it was to place the whole household as well as the whole administration unreservedly in the hands of a Prince, who could not understand that a constitutional King must not be a party leader. But as a matter of constitutional law Fox's view was by far the most logical and comprehensive. The Crown of England is hereditary, not elective. Incapacity in the King must be considered in the light of a temporary demise, on the occurrence of which the temporary succession passes at once to the heir if of age, and preserves the continuity of

the Constitution. Parliament, apart from the King, as the great council of the nation, may well recognise this state of affairs and call upon the Prince to enter upon his new duties; but Parliament, as part of the legislature apart from the King, has no power at all. It cannot by itself pass the smallest measure, much less impose restrictions on the executive. To get over the difficulty by making the affixing of the Great Seal by a Parliamentary Commission tantamount to the royal assent, was to introduce a totally new principle into the Constitution, and one far more dangerous than that of the inherent right of the Prince of Wales, for it came very near to dispensing with the royal assent altogether.

"It was intended," said Burke, "to set up a man with black eyebrows and a large wig, a kind of scarecrow to the two Houses, who was to give a fictitious assent in the royal name. The farce reminds me of a priest among savages, who raised an idol and directed its worship merely that he might secure to himself the meat that was offered as a sacrifice."

Fortunately for both parties the necessity for a decision never arose. Ireland, following the arguments of Fox, recognised the Prince as Regent in his own right. In England Pitt's bill, vesting the Regency in the Prince, but placing the whole management of the King's person and household in the hands of the Queen, and restricting very considerably the patronage exercisable by the Regent, passed the Commons and was before the Lords when the King recovered. Had it passed, and had the Prince, in accordance with his expressed intention, dismissed Pitt, summoned to his counsels Fox and the Duke of Portland and dissolved Parliament, the result would not improbably have somewhat disillusioned the Whig leaders. There is good reason to believe that the country in the full flow of its sympathy for the King, and

its indignant contempt for the Prince, with its deep-rooted suspicion of Fox, unappeased and unappeasable, would have inflicted upon the Whigs a chastisement so severe as almost to wipe them out of existence as a political party.

Among those who played the sorriest of parts in the Regency question was Thurlow, the Lord Chancellor. He had ever been among the stoutest of the henchmen of the King, and had acted as detective on behalf of the King in the Ministry of Rockingham. But there was one thing which he valued more than the King, and that was the woolsack. He had got accustomed to it, had grown to it in the course of so many years, and could not bear the thought of having to surrender it to Loughborough if the Whigs came in. Fortunately for him, what Sir G. Elliot finely calls his "table qualities," had endeared him to the Prince of Wales, and this gave him an opportunity of standing well with both sides. When the King was first taken ill, Thurlow made up his mind that recovery was hopeless, and at once put himself into communication with the Prince and the Duke of Portland. Secret interviews were held, and pledges given, and it soon began to be whispered on the Ministerial side that the Chancellor was playing false. Much amusement was caused one day after a Cabinet Council by the conduct of a page, who, having been sent in search of Thurlow's hat, which was not to be found, at last brought the missing article into the room where the Ministers were assembled, with the naive but compromising remark, "My Lords, I found it in the closet of the Prince of Wales." When Fox returned from Italy he found it practically settled that Thurlow was to retain the woolsack, and there was nothing left for him but to acquiesce. "I have swallowed the pill," he wrote to Sheridan, "and a most bitter one it was; I do not

remember ever feeling so uneasy about any political thing I ever did in my life." As the King's health improved, however, so did Thurlow's loyalty. He ceased his visits to the Prince, he became an ardent admirer of the Regency Bill. When it was certain that the King would recover, his zeal knew no bounds. Going down to the House of Lords, he drew a picture of the King in his affliction which touched all hearts, then, bursting into a flood of tears, he allowed himself to be carried away in a paroxysm of exuberant loyalty, and finished an impassioned peroration with the exclamation, "When I forget my King, may my God forget me." "Forget you," muttered Burke, who stood near, "the best thing that could happen to you." "Forget you," repeated Wilkes, with more wit than reverence, "He will see you d——d first." Pitt never forgot the hypocrisy of this scene, and took the earliest opportunity of placing the Great Seal in safer hands.

The following epitaph, one of the most pungent lampoons which ever destroyed a reputation, shows the estimation in which the Chancellor's character was generally held at the time:—

"To the memory of Thurlow.

Here lies, beneath the prostituted mace,
A patriot, with but one base wish—place.
Here lies, beneath the prostituted purse,
A peer with but one talent, how to curse.
Here lies, beneath the prostituted gown,
The guardian of all honour, but his own.
Statesman, with but one rule his steps to guide,
To shun the sinking, take the rising side.
Judge, with but one base law—to serve the time,
And see in wealth no weakness, power no crime.
Christian, with but one value for the name,
The scoffer's prouder privilege—to blaspheme.
Briton, with but one hope—to live a slave,
And dig in deathless infamy his grave."

If the Regency question was the most interesting, it was certainly not the most useful of the subjects which claimed the attention of Fox in Parliament during the ten years which elapsed between the overthrow of the coalition and the outbreak of the great war. During his whole political career, Fox had never wavered in his unqualified support of the removal of religious disability, the reform of the House of Commons, and the abolition of the slave trade; but it is clear from his published utterances that the three subjects appealed in a very different way to his mind and heart. Parliamentary reform he had inherited as an acknowledged part of the Whig policy, ever since George III. had shown that the conditions of an unreformed House of Commons were as favourable for the maintenance of Tory as they had been of Whig ascendency. It was a subject which the Opposition naturally took up when kept out of office by aristocratic or kingly influence. It was a subject they as naturally dropped when that influence was on their side. Fox never seems to have thoroughly understood the importance of the subject, or appreciated its bearing upon national liberty and progress. Even the disasters of the Wilkes case and of the American War only taught him the evils of corruption, not of faulty representation, and he had no scruples in 1783 in pressing the wishes of an unrepresentative House of Commons against the obvious wishes of the people. Pitt was the only statesman of that generation who really saw something of the deeper issues of the question, but after 1785, when the existing system seemed to be producing such excellent results, and any attempt to alter it boded such indefinite dangers, he was quite content to soothe his conscience to sleep by the time-honoured opiate of Walpole's maxim, *Quieta non movere.*

The truth is, Reform is essentially an Opposition question. No Government as long as it is strong in Parliament and popular in the constituencies is likely to be very anxious to try experiments. An Opposition, on the contrary, in the position of the Opposition of 1784, had every motive for energy. They had a great stain to wipe off their political escutcheon. They had a great defeat to avenge. They had every reason to welcome political experiments, for they could not be worse off than they were. It was true that some members of the party, like Burke, were opposed to any measure of reform, but they were very few in number. If Fox had had his heart in the question he would never have rested until he had forced his rival from his retreat, or have torn his weapons out of his feeble and unwilling hands and used them against him with deadly effect. But Fox did neither of these things. He took no action whatever between the abandonment of the cause by Pitt in 1785. and its revival under the influence of the French Revolution by Flood in 1790. In that year he supported Flood in a short and languid speech. In 1791 he again allowed the question to drop, and in 1792 resigned it permanently to Grey and the Society of the Friends of the People, although he disapproved of the Society himself, refused to become a member of it, and must have known perfectly well that in the exasperated state of public opinion the only result of permitting the Society to monopolise reform would be to unite the whole Tory party in blind opposition to the question, and postpone indefinitely all possibility of settling it on a fair and reasonable basis. There was at that time no subject of more vital importance to the well-being of England than that of parliamentary reform. That its solution was postponed to a date at which it could not fail to bring with it some of the evils of a

revolution, was due almost as much to the indolence of Fox as to the selfishness of Pitt.

In the various attempts made between 1783 and 1793 to remove religious disabilities, Fox played a more generous part. The idea of freedom from personal restriction formed a large part of his conception of liberty. His thoughts on the due relations of Church and State had never been profound or comprehensive. He moved with but slightly greater ease in the atmosphere of religion than he did in that of finance. A comparison of his speeches on these subjects with those of Burke, discloses at a glance the whole difference between the views of a man who has studied a problem with an intense desire to arrive at the true solution, and has an intimate and heart-felt sympathy with the subject-matter of his thought; and the judgment of a clear, forcible, and powerful mind brought to bear upon an unaccustomed subject, the full bearings of which it does not, and perhaps does not care to, wholly understand. Fox fully grasped the principle of religious toleration. That any one should be prevented by law from worshipping God in his own way (provided, of course, there was no outrage of public order or decency) was hateful to his mind. He laid down the broad principle that the State has nothing to do with the opinions, but only with the actions of men. He supported with all his energy the Catholic Relief Acts of 1778 and 1791, and himself brought the religious grievances of the Unitarians before Parliament in 1792. But the doctrine of religious toleration was not seriously disputed. Pitt himself was responsible for the Relief Act of 1791, and the Bishops supported it as eagerly as Fox. Even Lord North, now infirm and blind, had himself carried down to the House to speak in favour of the Unitarians, and the bill was only lost because the Commons agreed with

Burke that they were really quite as much a revolutionary political faction as they were a religious body.

On the much more serious question of the admission to offices in the State of persons opposed to the religion of the State, Fox never really faced the difficulties of his own position. He had an amiable desire that everybody should have what they wanted. He thought it absurd and unreasonable to deprive the King of the services of able and loyal men because of their religious opinions. He had a very natural and just abhorrence of the particular test imposed upon Nonconformists by the legislation of Charles II., which excluded the conscientious, put no hindrance in the way of the sacrilegious, and placed a very unfair burden upon the consciences of the clergy. His own view of the Church was that put forward by Hoadly at the beginning of the century, and adopted by Walpole and the Whigs. In the language of the 18th century, it was the low-church view, and in modern days would be termed Erastian. According to this view, the Church was merely a State organisation for the teaching of morality upon a religious basis. Its functions were to inculcate good and reprove evil, and the more reasonably and moderately it discharged these functions, the more splendid appeared its reputation to the eyes of Fox. It was the sanction of the State which gave its authority to the Church, and even apparently secured the truth of its teaching. "I will ever commend," he once cried, with a momentary aberration into nonsense, "the enlightened policy of the time of the Union, which allowed both the kirk in Scotland and the hierarchy in England to be religions equally *true!*" "Equally true" certainly no Act of Parliament could make them, but what he meant, no doubt, was "equally the religion of the State," for his argument was that, if the State thus recog-

nised authoritatively two religions within its borders, it could not logically object to be served by those who differed in religion. The Test and Corporation Acts accordingly seemed to him as simply acts of persecution imposed by a dominant party in the interests of monarchy. With the more enlightened views of the 18th century, all excuse for such persecution had passed away, and Fox looked forward with hope to the time when the State would have nothing to say to opinion whatever, religious or irreligious, and offices from the highest to the lowest should be thrown open to all, irrespective of creed. The ideal was a noble one. It is one of Fox's chief claims to be considered the founder of the new Whig party, that he formulated so distinctly the exact meaning of the policy of religious liberty which has since been carried into effect by them. Yet it was a policy essentially incomplete, too narrow in its basis, too sectarian in its objects to be wholly successful. It was the policy of an opportunist, not of a statesman, an opportunist imperfectly acquainted with the gravity of the problem with which he was dealing, and only able to see one small part of it at a time.

The adjustment of the relations between Church and State to the problems caused by the existence of religious division has been the most crucial question with which England has had to deal since the Reformation. Henry VIII. and Elizabeth had no doubt at all about the principle which ought to be followed. It was that of the absolute oneness of Church and State under the Crown, a principle which found its necessary and logical expression in the attempt to insist that every officer and member of the one State should also be a member of the one Church. The whole theory of the Royal Supremacy, and the whole policy of religious uniformity, with its long series of penal

acts, rest alike upon this basis. The great and typical work of Hooker takes it as its central thought. Opposed to the popular religion of the day, the principle failed and was overthrown at the Great Rebellion. It revived at the Restoration, but the number of religious dissidents was then so great that its maintenance became intensely difficult, and the Test and Corporation Acts were passed with the express object of defending it, fiction though it had grown to be. At the Revolution it underwent a modification. The principle which had succeeded so well under Richelieu in France was adopted in England, which may be shortly expressed in the formula —Religious Toleration—State Uniformity. The oneness of Church and State was still to be maintained for the security of the State, for the preservation of continuity in the constitution, for the dignity of the Church; but liberty of conscience was to be respected in religious matters.

But the proposals of Fox went to the length of sweeping away the principle altogether, and establishing in its place the totally opposite one that the State is wholly apart from religion, and has nothing to do with it. And he did not see that the carrying out of this principle, simply by the removal of existing disabilities upon Nonconformists, was in reality only a half measure of religious liberty. It left the Church still under the operation of the theory of the oneness of Church and State, and—as the historical results of that theory—under the operation of the Royal Supremacy and of parliamentary control. That is to say, he left the largest religious body in England under the control of an assembly, the doors of which he had just opened to its enemies, and subject to no slight extent in its administration to the supremacy of a Crown which, owing to the advance of Whig principles, was every day becoming more and more merged

in Parliament. Such disabilities, with regard to legislation and management, were intelligible enough and of little practical moment when the State legislature and executive were bound up with the Church. They amounted to a very galling tyranny when the State legislature contained a sufficient number of the enemies of the Church to prevent it from carrying out the smallest reform in its own organisation, or adapting itself to the new claims which the growth of population were daily making. To maintain an Established Church, with the existing theory of the Royal Supremacy, after it had been established as a principle of the Constitution that the State, as such, has nothing to do with religion, was a contradiction in terms, and an injustice in fact. Fox himself was strongly in favour of the maintenance of an Established Church, as long as it was the Church of the majority; but when he proposed to alter the whole basis upon which an Established Church had been dealt with since the Reformation, he ought, at least, to have taken care that, in giving religious liberty to a minority, he was not taking it away from the majority of the nation. Fox himself never saw the completion of the work which he took over from Beaufoy in 1792. During the terror of the French Revolution a Tory Parliament was not likely to alter lightly an important constitutional principle. But it was Fox who planted this particular measure in the seed plot of Whig policy, and when the turn of the political wheel gave a majority to the Whigs, it was too late for politicians to see anything beyond the party triumph and the party obligations. They carried the bill, they did not solve the question.

In his advocacy of personal liberty, Fox was on safer, because on more congenial, grounds. Ever since the decisions of Lord Mansfield in Wilkes's case, the courts

had continued to hold that in a case of libel it was in the province of the judge to say whether the words or writing complained of constituted a libel, while the duty of the jury was confined to saying whether the alleged libel was published. This doctrine seemed to most statesmen and to some lawyers, notably Lord Camden, to be seriously detrimental to the liberty of the subject, and to impair the right of every Englishman to be tried by his peers. Erskine, in an eloquent speech in the Dean of Asaph's case, drew public attention to the matter, and Fox applied the proper parliamentary remedy. In 1791 he succeeded in passing through Parliament, with Pitt's support, an Act declaratory of the law of libel, by which it was asserted by Parliament that the jury had the power of finding a general verdict upon the whole issue as in other criminal cases. This was Fox's chief personal contribution to the statute book. It contains only four clauses, but its importance in securing personal liberty is but little less than that of the Habeas Corpus Act itself.

In his effort to procure the abolition of the Slave Trade Fox is seen at his best. He far outstripped all his contemporaries, except Wilberforce, in zeal, and presented in his single-hearted humanity a striking contrast to the calculating selfishness of Pitt. In his first speech on the subject he laid down the broad principle that the Slave Trade must not be regulated but abolished; and to this he resolutely adhered until the opportunity came for him to carry his words into effect. In 1791, speaking to Mr. Wilberforce's motion for a committee, he delivered what some critics have considered the finest of his speeches in Parliament. There is a ring of true enthusiasm about it, wholly wanting in his speeches on the Test Act, and in it he shows clearly the reasons which led him to speak so strongly as he did:—

"No man," he proudly said, "will suspect me of being an enemy to political freedom. Political freedom is undoubtedly as great a blessing as any people under heaven can pant after, but political freedom, when it comes to be compared with personal freedom, sinks into nothing, and becomes no blessing at all by comparison. It is personal freedom that is now the point in question. Personal freedom must be the first object of every human being. It is a right, and he who deprives a fellow creature of it is absolutely criminal, and he who withholds when it is in his power to restore it, is no less criminal in withholding."

Fox had indeed declared war with his whole heart against arbitrary power exercised against individual liberty. It was that which inspired his attacks upon George III. and the American War. It was that which impelled him to place the ægis of Parliament over the ryot of India. It was that which urged him in hot haste to the punishment of Warren Hastings. It was that which made him see nothing but hope in the rising of the French peasant, and triumph in the fall of the Bastille. It was a generous sentiment, and it sprang from a generous and warm heart. Never was it more generously and wisely invoked than in the assault against that castle manned by selfishness and tyranny, and peopled by misery and despair, known as the African Slave Trade:—

"I spoke," he writes to T. Grenville after the division, "I believe very well, and indeed it is the thing which has given me most pleasure since I saw you; for I do think it is a cause in which one ought to be an enthusiast, and in which one cannot help being pleased with oneself for having done right."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAR WITH FRANCE.

"How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world and how much the best." Such was the comment of Fox on the arrival of the news of the fall of the Bastille on July 14th, 1789. It expresses concisely his consistent opinion on the French Revolution. Nor indeed could it be otherwise. Fox could not remain Fox and not see the best side of the Revolution, any more than Burke could remain Burke and not see the worst. Fox had ever been an asserter of abstract rights, just as Burke had been the apostle of practical expediency. Fox was always ready to attack and destroy the abuse which seemed to him to threaten the national well-being, Burke to improve it till it ceased to be an abuse. To Burke institutions were sacred things, valuable in themselves for the history to which they witnessed, for the security which they guaranteed. To Fox they were but the creation of the people, they existed but for the welfare of the governed, and they ought to exist not one moment longer than they ministered to that welfare. While Fox was urging the right of the American Colonists to resist injustice and claim freedom, Burke was pointing out the impossibility of coercing a country 3000 miles away.

While Fox was vindicating the right of the natives of India to just government at our hands, Burke was declaiming against outrages inflicted upon a religion and a philosophy among the most venerable in the world. While Fox was demanding the formal disavowal by the Legislature of the last vestiges of religious persecution, Burke's eyes were fixed upon the danger of disturbing the old relations between Church and State. With his intense love of personal and political liberty, with his intense hatred of arbitrary power, with his strong vivid sympathy for suffering humanity, his simple faith in human nature, his belief in abstract right, his possession of keen sensibilities, his lack of deep political thinking, Fox could not fail to throw all his enthusiasm and all his strength into a movement, which had for its object the emancipation of man from one of the most corrupt and abject tyrannies that have ever oppressed the human race.

All that was best in Fox's nature rose in protest against the *ancien régime.* He had looked upon France hitherto as the chief mainstay of despotism in Europe. Now she was standing forth among nations as the pioneer of liberty. The very unexpectedness of the change disarmed criticism and awakened enthusiasm. That a movement in favour of liberty could come from such a quarter raised hopes indeed of a return to the golden age. Nor were these hopes as chimerical as such hopes usually are. The first acts of the Revolution in France were conceived distinctly on constitutional lines. An influential party in the Assembly deliberately adopted the English constitution as their model. It was the *bourgeoisie* not the populace, that reaped the fruits of the destruction of the Bastille. It was they who ascended the throne left vacant by the abdication of Louis. It was they who bargained with their King about the terms on which monarchy might be

preserved. There was nothing to an English mind necessarily dangerous or revolutionary in all this. The party who were superseding Louis in France belonged to just the same class as those who made Parliament supreme over the King in England in 1640. The abolition of feudal rights, voted on the memorable 4th of August, merely did at one blow what England had long ago done by gradual steps. Even the civil constitution of the clergy would seem a step in the right direction to a Whig of the religious school of Hoadly; and the declaration of the rights of man, with its inflated and magniloquent language, would seem a mere piece of French rhetoric inspired by the example of the American colonists and on that account more than pardonable. Fox was not alone in this view of affairs. All Whigs, and indeed most Tories, agreed with him in the cordial sympathy which they extended to their neighbours in their struggle to be free. They were flattered by the evident respect with which England was looked upon as the pattern of free States. They considered that a constitution, based upon popular election, in which the King was head of the executive, chose his Ministers, and had a suspensive veto on legislation, was an eminently sensible and practical scheme well calculated to give to France the blessing of free institutions.

But by the beginning of the session of 1791 a considerable change had passed over English opinion. The violence of the Paris mob, the occasional outbreaks of unreasoning and cruel fury, the brutal disrespect shown to the royal captives at the Tuileries, made the tide of sympathy to ebb. Revolutions, if they are to receive the applause of England, must be conducted on the English model, and be decorous, restrained, and perhaps even dull. To the close observer far more serious symptoms

were showing themselves. The doctrines of the rights of man, taught by Rousseau and embodied in the declaration of 1789, were seen to be no mere fanfaronade, but a solemn and earnest political faith, which the clubs of Paris were prepared not merely to hold but to enforce. The seizure of the property of the Church, the application of the principle of election to all ecclesiastical offices, the imposition of the oath to the civil constitution upon all clergy, appeared like deliberate attacks upon the oldest institution in France, if not a declaration of war against religion itself. Men asked themselves anxiously, Was the connection between the revolution of 1789 and that of 1688 so close after all? With the King a prisoner, the Church an enemy, the rights of property threatened, the old landmarks of the nation swept away, the doctrine of the natural equality of man proclaimed as the cardinal principle of the revolution, France seemed to have cut herself off from her past history altogether, and to be sliding down the inclined plane of revolution into the abyss of anarchy, without hope of safety, and without possibility of recovery.

When doubts such as these were in men's minds, the publication of Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution' turned those doubts into certainties. Never did political pamphlet have so immediate and striking an effect. It was not mainly because the principles of government which Burke laid down were so convincing, because the rich stores of illustration at his command were so comprehensive, or because his prophecies of future evil seemed so probable, that the pamphlet had such an extraordinary effect; but because he put into words, clear, telling, and unanswerable, what other people were trying to think out vaguely and clumsily for themselves. Fox, naturally enough, was not impressed by his arguments. They were

opposed to his whole method of political thought. But he must have seen quite clearly from the moment of its publication, that it could not fail to cost him the political support of its author, and might not improbably endanger the allegiance of his friends. Yet, so far from smoothing matters over, he went out of his way to hasten the catastrophe. On the 15th of April, in a debate upon the foreign policy of the Government, he praised the new Government and Constitution of France "as the most glorious fabric ever raised by human integrity since the creation of man." On the 21st, in a debate upon a bill introduced by Pitt for providing a new constitution for Canada, known as the Quebec Bill, he took occasion to throw down a challenge to the world on the subject of his opinions on the French Revolution, and, referring pointedly to Burke, concluded his speech by saying, sorry as he was to differ from some of his friends, he would never be backward in delivering his opinion, and he did not wish to recede from anything he had formerly advanced. A challenge so offered could not be denied, and Burke accordingly, when the Quebec Bill reached its next stage, began to deliver a very carefully reasoned exercise on the principles of the rights of man, and their results as evidenced in France. The actual motion before the House was that the Quebec Bill be read clause by clause, and it was certainly rather a stretch of parliamentary order to found upon so slender and distant a basis an arraignment of the French Revolution. But Burke evidently conceived that he had been challenged, and that he was in honour bound to reply at the earliest possible moment. He looked upon it as an intellectual disputation, not as a party fight, and seems to have chosen this means of defending his opinions in order to keep as far as he could from the regions of passion. But directly he

reached the subject which he had at heart, interruptions began to be made. He was called to order. He tried to explain. He was called to order again. The interruptions came from his own party. He thought they were instigated by Fox. Evidently there was a determination on the part of the Whigs not to let him speak. Under such circumstances even the coldest temper will assert itself, but not yet did he give free rein to the passion which was boiling within him. Turning round on the pack of snarling curs yapping at his heels with sublime dignity and bitter sarcasm he likened himself to Lear. "The little dogs and all—Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart—see they bark at me," and then sat down awaiting the decision of the House. But even then Fox was not satisfied. If malice was possible with Fox, it was malice that continued to goad and to spur him on. Speaking to the question of order, he said tauntingly that on that day it was impossible for any one to be out of order, it was a day of privilege, when any gentleman might get up, select his mark and abuse any Government he pleased—then launching forth into the very subject which he and his friends had forbidden to Burke, he complained that he had been unjustly traduced as a Republican, repeated again and justified his opinion that the Revolution was one of the most glorious events in the history of mankind, and then, addressing himself to Burke, he said :—

"When the proper period of discussion comes, feeble as my powers comparatively are, I will be ready to maintain the principle I have asserted even against my right honourable friend's superior eloquence—to maintain that the rights of man, which he has ridiculed as chimerical and visionary, are in fact the basis and foundation of every rational constitution, even of the British constitution itself. Having been taught by him that no revolt of a nation was ever caused without provocation, I cannot help feeling joy ever since the constitution of France

became founded on the rights of man. To deny this is neither more nor less than to libel the British constitution, and no book that my honourable friend can cite, no words he can deliver in debate, can induce me to change or abandon that opinion. I differ from him on that subject *toto coelo*."

Burke rose slowly to reply. With a great effort to keep full control over himself, he began in grave and quiet tones, but as he proceeded to deal with the personal attack now made upon him by his friend, as he repelled the misrepresentation of his opinions and words, as he recalled the interruptions of a few hours ago, and pictured Fox "supported by a corps of well-disciplined troops, expert in their manoeuvres, obedient to the word of their commander," banded against him, he could no longer restrain his emotions. Every word he spoke made him realise with more intense vividness the irreparable character of the breach now opening between the friends of twenty-five years of close political life, every moment as it passed strung his nerves up to the height of the sacrifice he knew must come, till he could bear it no longer. Bursting into a tempest of passion, he declared that, if the choice had now come to him between his personal friendship and his love for the Constitution, with his last breath he would cry, "Fly from the French Constitution."—"There is no loss of friendship," whispered Fox. "Yes there is," said Burke. "I know the price of my conduct. I have done my duty at the price of my friend. Our friendship is at an end."

Fox, when it was now too late, was overwhelmed with grief. He could hardly speak for some time through the intensity of his emotion. He realised at last the thoughtlessness with which he had pushed matters to a crisis. He must have foreseen that Burke would not be long alone in his isolation. But there was no possibility of undoing the past. The difference between them had

far greater issues than those of a personal quarrel. It marks the watershed between the old Whigs and the new Radicals. Burke, on the one side, attached to institutions, eager for administrative reform, suspicious of general principles, with an unquestioning faith in gradual development as the truest political wisdom, reaches back into a glorious past, and forms one of the noble line of constitutional statesmen who have developed by steady growth the British oak of liberty under the fostering care of the Crown, the educated classes, and the Church. Fox, on the other side, with a clear faith in abstract rights, strong in humanitarian sympathy, with a hearty hatred of class interests, and a real belief in the essential goodness and wisdom of human nature, looked forward to the golden age when personal liberty should be secured, and class oppression vanish, and religious intolerance be crushed, under the beneficent rule of the sovereign people, who, knowing their own best-interests, will insist upon maintaining them. This difference of view had existed in the Whig party ever since the American War, but as long as liberty, equality, and fraternity were confined to the Declaration of Independence, and were entrusted to the guardianship of a highly business-like people, nobody paid very much attention to them. When in the hands of one of the first of European nations, as impulsive in action as it is logical in mind, these principles took the form of the confiscation of Church property, the suppression of the monarchy, and a clean sweep of all pre-existing institutions, men had to make up their minds on the subject, whether they wished it or not, and to regulate their political conduct accordingly even at the cost of personal friendship and party ties.

The immediate result of the quarrel between Fox and Burke was merely to deprive the Whig party of Burke's

services. For some time he remained isolated and alone, belonging to neither party though respected by both. The old Whigs were not yet prepared to renounce their allegiance. They remained in doubt, unable wholly to believe in the prophecies of Burke, or to acquiesce in the panegyrics of Fox. But by the close of the year 1792, a good many of the doubts then felt had become solved. The change was attributable chiefly to two things. The French had made a great step forward from constitutional monarchy to militant republicanism, and the monarchies of Europe had altered their attitude to France from one of suspicious neutrality to that of organised repression. While the quarrel between Burke and Fox was absorbing the attention of all Englishmen, Mirabeau had died, and with Mirabeau died the last chance of preserving for Louis XVI. any of his political authority. The failure of the ill-managed flight to Varennes, which occurred a few months afterwards, deprived him even of personal influence. For the ten months that the monarchy was still permitted to exist in name, he was but a phantom King who enjoyed his dignity so long, and so long only, as he exercised no independent judgment. In September, 1791, the Constituent Assembly came to an end, and the new constitution, that work of genius which had so excited the enthusiasm of Fox, came into being with the meeting of the Legislative Assembly on the 1st of October. This "stupendous monument of human integrity" lasted not quite a year. The lead in the Assembly was taken by the parties of the Girondists and of the Jacobins, who, much as they hated each other, hated still more the old Constitutionalists. They were one and all the apostles of the rights of man, the children of the sovereign people, and they were perfectly prepared to enforce their principles upon a reluctant Europe by the sword. "Let us tell Europe,"

cried the Girondist Isnard, "that if Cabinets engage Kings in war against peoples, we will engage peoples in war against Kings." The growth of military enthusiasm among all sections of Republicans in France is the distinguishing mark of the year 1792.

And on the other hand, while the military spirit was thus developing in France, a corresponding spirit of fear was spreading among the Courts of Europe, which led them to think of uniting to support the common interests of monarchy against the revolutionary doctrines. But as yet not one single Power, except perhaps Spain, really wished for war. The Emperor, the brother of Marie Antoinette, clung to peace so stubbornly as to make men doubt his affection. The King of Prussia and Catherine II. of Russia were intent only upon dividing the last morsel of Poland. Pitt absolutely refused to interfere in any way. Yet all of them were at war in less than two years. Just as in France it was the fear of internal traitors, and of foreign intimidation, which led to the horrors of the Reign of Terror, and the determination to spread the doctrines of the Revolution throughout Europe; so among the Great Powers of Europe, it was the fear of the revolutionary proselytism which led them unwillingly into war. At the conference of Pilnitz in August, 1791, the Emperor and the King of Prussia agreed to undertake an armed intervention in France if the rest of Europe would join them. The Girondist Ministry, irritated at the threat, issued a sentence of death against all emigrants, demanded the withdrawal of the declaration of Pilnitz, and finally declared war against the Emperor in January, 1792. A joint invasion of France by Austria and Prussia was the natural result of the French foolhardiness, but, as if on purpose to put the worst possible light on the intervention, the Duke of Brunswick who commanded the

Allies issued a proclamation in which he demanded unconditional surrender to Louis, and threatened to treat all who resisted as rebels. It was impossible to put more clearly the fact that it was a royal army, come in the interests of monarchy, to suppress in another country political opinions which it did not like. One crusade naturally produced another. The invasion led directly to the victory of the Jacobins, the overthrow of the monarchy, and the death of the King. The repulse of the invasion led no less directly to the occupation of Savoy and Belgium, to the opening of the Scheldt, to the threat of an invasion of Holland, to the order to the French generals to establish a republic wherever they could, and to the declaration of the war against England in February, 1793.

In this way acts of aggression on both sides plunged Europe into the most terrible of all modern wars, strongly against the wishes of all except the rulers of France; but in England matters could never have reached the crisis which they did in 1793, had not the sentiments and opinions of the English people, as well of the English Government, undergone a great change. At the beginning of 1791 Englishmen had begun to retract somewhat of the delight in which they hailed the overthrow of the *ancien régime* in 1789. They had begun to reflect more upon the dangers which Burke had found lurking in the plausible phrases of the declaration of rights. They had begun to distrust a movement which seemed to be so much at the mercy of the Parisian mob. The complexion of the Legislative Assembly, the war fever, and the administrative incapacity which characterised the Girondists, frightened the Tories into sympathy, though not yet into alliance, with the policy of armed intervention. They followed the movements of the Duke of Brunswick with

anxiety, hoping that he would put an end to what threatened to become a nuisance to Europe. "The Duke of Brunswick's progress," writes Lord Grenville, then Foreign Minister, to his brother on September 20th, "does not keep pace with the impatience of our wishes;" and on the 11th of October, when the news of his retreat had arrived, he adds:—

"We are all much disappointed with the result of the great expectations that had been formed from the Duke of Brunwick's campaign. Whatever be the true cause of his retreat, the effect is equally to be regretted."

When the Foreign Minister of a Ministry pledged to neutrality wrote thus, it may be taken for granted that the opinions of most of his party were not less strong in favour of the Allies. At the same time the growth of revolutionary sympathies in England, and the ill-advised language in which they were expressed, made Tories begin to fear lest the revolutionary propaganda instituted by the Republic might not after all disturb the peace of society at home. The publication of Paine's 'Rights of Man,' the formation of the "corresponding societies" all over England, consisting of men who openly avowed republican principles, and delighted in using the catchwords of French politics, increased suspicion far out of proportion to the intrinsic importance of their movements. They were accepted in France as the voice of the English people, and in England as representing the real opinions of the Whig leaders. In the caricatures of the time Fox and Sheridan almost universally appear in the guise of conspirators and republicans, whether discovered by Burke in the act of blowing up the constitution with French powder, or joining with Paine and Priestley in riotous and seditious orgies.

In reality the Whigs were by no means so confident about the Revolution as they had been. Fox himself

never faltered in his splendid if unreasoning faith in the ultimate goodness of the movement, but he was sickened and horrified at the mob violence of the 20th of June, and the massacres of September 2nd. On the 3rd of September, 1792, he writes to his nephew Lord Holland :—

"I do not think near so ill of the business of the 10th of August (*i.e.* the overthrow of the monarchy), as I did upon first hearing it. However, it is impossible not to look with disgust at the bloody means which have been taken even supposing the end to be good, and I cannot help fearing that we are not yet near the end of these trials and executions."

A few days later he writes :—

"I had just made up my mind to the events of the 10th of August, when the horrid accounts of the 2nd of this month arrived, and I really consider the horrors of that day and night as the most heart-breaking event that ever happened to those who, like me, are fundamentally and unalterably attached to the true cause. There is not, in my opinion, a shadow of excuse for this horrid massacre, not even the possibility of extenuating it in the smallest degree."

Thus deprived by the action of the French themselves of any possible sympathy for their internal administration, and alienated and disgusted more and more as time went on by the wickedness and cruelty of the Terror, Fox turned his attention mainly to the external relations of France, and strove with all his power to avert the threatening danger of a war with England. He took as his great principle the absolute wickedness of any attempt to force upon the people of France a government of which they disapproved. The invasion of the Allies in 1792 was in his eyes an act of pure tyranny, the Duke of Brunswick's proclamation he described as "revolting to the feelings of mankind;" of his retreat after Valmy he writes :—

"No public event, not excepting Saratoga and Yorktown, ever happened that gave me so much delight. The defeats of great armies

of invaders always gave me the greatest satisfaction from Xerxes' time downwards, and what has happened in America and France will, I hope, make what Cicero says of armed force be the opinion of all mankind, *Invidiosum, detestabile, imbecillum, caducum*

In this spirit he applied all his energies to the prevention of war. "I shall think the Ministry mad," he writes, "if they suffer anything to draw them into a war with France, though I really do think Pitt in these businesses is a great bungler." That England should go to war in alliance with the tyrants of 1792 was in his eyes, not merely unjustifiable, but an abdication of her position as the chief of the free States of Europe. He agreed that the violation of the Scheldt by France formed a *casus fœderis*, and that if Holland claimed our help, and France refused redress, war could not be avoided; but he maintained that a direct and friendly negotiation with the French Government, and an evident separation of the interests of England from those of the Allies, would easily prevent a rupture, and afford the only chance of preserving the life of Louis XVI. With these objects, at the beginning of the session of 1792–93, he moved an amendment to the Address, and proposed that a Minister should be sent to Paris to negotiate.

The numbers in the division showed that the rupture in the Whig party was now complete. The events of 1792 had convinced the older section of Whigs that the principles of the Revolution were incompatible with monarchical institutions, and dangerous to the welfare of Europe. Only fifty members followed Fox into the lobby, and they comprised entirely the left wing of the party. The rest either remained away or voted against him. Windham, once the staunchest of his supporters, spoke strenuously on the Ministerial side. Directly the measures of defence spoken of in the King's speech were

introduced into the House, the breach was made still more evident. Fox throughout the session spoke with great vigour and more than ordinary earnestness, in eloquent condemnation of a war, as he phrased it, against opinion, but the whole of the older Whigs were now against him. The Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Mr. Thomas Grenville, each one of whose names recalled the trusted ally of a great conflict in the past, could no longer follow him into the regions of abstract principle, but took their places with Burke within the rampart of time-honoured institutions. The old Whig party of 1688 had ceased to be. One Revolution had destroyed the child of the other. It was inevitable that it should be so, for the principles of the old Whig party had worked themselves out, and its aristocratic framework had fallen to pieces. With the French Revolution new men and new principles had come into being. The youthful democracy, recently born, was still in the nursery;—an infant Hercules, terrible in its strength, ungoverned in its passion, attractive and repellent by turns, a prodigy too ill regulated as yet to be obeyed by men of sober judgment. Against it were arrayed the forces of society enlisted under the banner of existing institutions. The Throne, the Church, the Constitution, formed the natural watchwords of defence, and gathered round them all, whether Tory or Whig, who were opposed to democracy. Fox, strictly speaking, belonged to neither side. In his love for the Revolution he was a democrat, in his love for the constitution he was almost a Tory. The principles of democracy were to him always much more of an ideal than they were a political programme. Still, as events worked themselves out, he became enough of a democrat to form the rock on which the wave of English parties was irretrievably to

split, and with his diminished band of fifty followers to lay the foundation of modern radicalism in twelve long weary years of opposition.

Fortunately for England the French would not wait for the slowly increasing pressure of public opinion to have its due effect. On February 1st, 1793, they declared war against England on their own account. The establishment of the Terror, the execution of the Queen, the repudiation of Christianity, following quick upon the declaration of war, removed any lingering doubts which may still have existed in the minds of law-abiding and God-fearing Englishmen. All that Burke had prophesied was in the act of accomplishment. The aristocracy, the Church, the Monarchy, political and personal liberty, and even Christianity itself, had been thrown overboard one after another in the mad frenzy of revolution. Jacobinism stood out clearly to the eyes of all who prized the blessings of civilisation as the enemy and the scourge of the human race, not less destructive, and in its nature more immoral, than the barbarism of Attila or the religion of Islam. Pitt therefore had the nation at his back when he took up the glove of battle thrown down by France in February, 1793. War had been quite inevitable ever since France had determined to carry the principles of the Revolution into other countries. Pitt and Grenville, if left to themselves, would have put off the evil day as long as possible, but their hands were forced by public opinion in England and republican enthusiasm in France. There was no similarity to English minds between the action of the Allies in 1792 and the action of England in 1793. The former was a war undertaken to compel France to accept a form of government which was distasteful to her; the latter was a war undertaken to prevent France from imposing Jacobin opinions and democratic government

upon other nations. The system of revolutionary proselytism adopted in the autumn of 1792 exactly reversed the whole condition of affairs. It was to England what the declaration of Pilnitz was to France; and it was not until that system was carried into effect in Savoy, and was on the point of being carried into effect in Belgium, that Pitt began unwillingly to arm.

This was the weak point of Fox's position. It was all very well eloquently to denounce the war as one waged against opinion. It was a fair party charge to make that Pitt had surrendered his principle of neutrality, and had made common cause with despotism against freedom of opinion. It was reasonable enough to maintain that there was no logical halting place between complete disregard of Jacobinism and the forcible restoration of the *ancien régime*. But every educated man could see perfectly clearly that there was all the difference in the world between the right of a nation to adopt whatever form of government it pleased, and profess whatever opinions it preferred without let or hindrance, and the right of a nation to try and establish that form of government, and preach those doctrines, in the territories of neighbouring States. This was a distinction which Fox wholly ignored, but it is one which Englishmen at once comprehended, which Pitt acted upon, and which forms the justification of England in the war of 1793.

The history of the years which elapsed between the outbreak of the war in 1793 and the Whig secession in 1797 form Fox's best title to fame as an Opposition leader. He was in a hopeless minority. He had lost the support of many of his closest and dearest friends. Hardly more than fifty or sixty members still owned his leadership, and of those some, like Grey, were in his eyes injudicious, others, like Sheridan, of no moral weight. Almost alone he had

to bear the burden of directing a steady and vigorous opposition to a policy, which from the bottom of his heart he believed to be both suicidal and wicked, with no reward before him except the possible gratitude of after times. There can be nothing more dispiriting to a politician than the obligation of spending session after session in hopeless warfare against organised stupidity. That this was Fox's position no one could dispute. Whatever opinions may be held as to the necessity and the justice of the war, there is an universal agreement as to the folly and incapacity which signalised its conduct. What can be said for a finance minister who continued to borrow year after year £1,000,000 at high interest to put it away in a sinking fund in order to pay itself off? who obtained loans by issuing bonds of £100 for £50 to £60 which were certain to rise in value when the strain of war was over? who in four years added 80 millions to the national debt? What can be said for a War Minister who twice placed the English army under the imbecile leadership of the Duke of York? who wasted the resources of the country upon small expeditions over all parts of the world? and who in seven years of warfare never discovered a capable general or won a great victory? What can be said of a Home Minister who in abject terror of a few blatant and self-important democratic orators took away one after another most of the safeguards of personal liberty?

Against these measures Fox directed an unremitting attack. He divided the House again and again on the conduct of the war and the subsidising of the German powers. He sought to enlist on his side the growing feeling of distrust which naturally attended continued failure in the field. He made energetic appeals in favour of peace whenever opportunity offered. He threw all his

strength into the denunciation of the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act and the Seditious Meetings Act and the rest of Pitt's code of executive terror.

"We have had warm and good debates in Parliament," he writes in 1794, "in which, if my partiality does not deceive me, our advantage in speaking has been as great as that of the enemy in voting, especially upon the suspension of the Habeas Corpus and on my motion for peace. I believe the country is heartily tired of the war, but men dare not show themselves. I think, of all the measures of the Government, this last nonsense about conspiracy is the most mischievous, and at the same time the most foolish."

Again, in 1795 he says:—

"I think there is something more truly diabolical in the part we are acting now, than in the conduct of any nation in history. Peace is the wish of the French, of Italy, Spain, Germany, and all the world, and Great Britain is alone the cause of preventing its accomplishment, and this not for any point of honour or even of interest, but lest there should be an example in the modern world of a great and powerful Republic. Everybody says the country is nearly unanimous for peace, the Ministers as warlike as ever."

Again, a few weeks later, he writes of the Seditious Meetings Bill:—

"There appears to me to be no choice at present but between an absolute surrender of the liberties of the people and a vigorous assertion, attended, I admit, with considerable hazard at a time like the present. My view of things is, I own, very gloomy, and I am convined that in a very few years this Government will become absolute, or that confusion will arise of a nature almost as much to be deprecated as despotism itself. That the Ministers mean to bring on the first of these evils appears to me so clear, that I cannot help considering any man who denies it as a fool or hypocrite, and I cannot disguise from myself that there are but too many who wish for the second."

In this criticism Fox does but scant justice to Pitt. The inroads upon personal liberty made by Pitt during the progress of the French Revolution, arose from too great a dread of the influence of the democratic propaganda, not from a desire to found a despotism. They

were, like the war itself, defensive, not agressive in their character, and they passed away easily with the terror which gave them birth. Pitt's obstinate continuance of the war in spite of failure, and in spite of desertion, sprang also from the same belief, but in this case its results were more disastrous. England had gone to war to prevent Europe being revolutionised by the sword; but all danger of the success of democratic proselytism passed away with the fall of the Jacobins in 1794. By that time the spirit which ruled France had quite altered. The victories of the French armies had revived the old love for military glory, and before that the star of abstract democracy paled. Frenchmen were no longer mainly anxious to emancipate the world, they were much more anxious to win battles, and to extend the frontiers of France. It was the ghost of Louis XIV. which Europe had to deal with in 1795, not the red spectre of Jacobinism. The other nations of Europe perceived this. They had long ago given up the idea of forcing the Bourbons upon a reluctant nation. They would be quite content to retire from the position of champions of monarchical orthodoxy, and take up once more the old familiar task of rearranging the map of Europe, so that everyone should have a bit of what he wanted, enough to stimulate the appetite, but not enough to satisfy the craving. Prussia made a separate peace in April, 1795. Spain followed her example in June. The Emperor was only prevented from doing the same by the bribes of Pitt. Just at this moment, in the interval between the fall of the Jacobins and the rise of Napoleon, peace was possible on honourable and satisfactory terms. Fox saw this at once, and redoubled his efforts. Pitt could not see it. The red spectre still dazzled him. To plod steadily on, doggedly and determinedly, undeterred by failure, un-

elated by success, along the path of resistance, until France was crushed and Jacobinism was killed, seemed to him the plain duty which patriotism dictated. And so the opportunity was lost. Jacobinism as a danger to Europe had indeed committed suicide in the Terror, but France had a greater curse still in her womb. Pitt insisted on the continuance of the war, and the war gave birth to Napoleon. Military despotism, brutal, selfish, and unscrupulous, soon ousted Jacobinism as the bugbear of Europe, and England, which had cheerfully, if blindly, obeyed Pitt in refusing peace in 1795, had to fight on almost singlehanded against the tyrant, until she received her reward as the champion of the freedom of Europe in the triumph of 1815.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. ANN'S HILL.

AMONG the many disappointments of Fox's life, there was none which touched him more poignantly than the difference which sprung up between himself and the older Whigs on the subject of the French Revolution. Wonderful as were his spirits, he was too warmhearted not to feel deeply his separation from old friends such as Elliot and Thomas Grenville, too sensitive not to understand the grave rebuke conveyed by the withdrawal of the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam. A Whig party, which no longer numbered in its ranks the Cavendishes and the Bentincks and the Wentworths, seemed indeed, in the eyes of a politician of the eighteenth century, to be but a maimed and mutilated trunk. On the 9th of March, 1794, Fox writes sorrowfully to his nephew on the subject:—

"You will easily imagine how much I felt the separation from persons with whom I had so long been in the habit of agreeing; it seemed some way as if I had the world to begin anew, and if I could have done it with honour what I should best have liked would have been to retire from politics altogether; but this could not be done, and there remains nothing but to get together the remains of our party, and begin, like Sisyphus, to roll the stone up again, which long before it reaches the summit may probably roll down again."

In the August of the same year he breaks out with still greater pathos :—

"I have nothing to say for my old friends, nor, indeed, as politicians have they any right to any tenderness from me; but I cannot forget how long I have lived in friendship with them, nor can I avoid feeling the most severe mortification when I recollect the certainty I used to entertain that they never would disgrace themselves as I think they have done. I cannot forget that ever since I was a child, Fitzwilliam has been in all situations my warmest and most affectionate friend, and the person in the world of whom decidedly I have the best opinion, and so in most respects I have still, but as a politician I cannot reconcile his conduct with what I, who have known him for more than five-and-thirty years, have always thought to be his character. There is a sentiment of Lord Rochester that I have always much admired, and which I feel the truth of very forcibly upon this occasion; it is this: To be ill-used by those on whom we have bestowed favours is so much in the course of things, and ingratitude is so common, that a wise man can feel neither much surprise nor pain when he experiences it, but to be ill-used by those to whom we owe obligations which we never can forget, and towards whom we must continue to feel affection and gratitude, is indeed a most painful sensation. I think they have all behaved very ill to me, and for most of them, who certainly owe much more to me than I do to them, I feel nothing but contempt, and do not trouble myself about them; but Fitzwilliam is an exception indeed, and to my feelings for him everything Lord Rochester says applies very strongly indeed. I hope you will come home soon, it will make amends to me for everything, and make me feel alive again about politics, which I am now quite sick of and only attend to because I think it is a duty to do so, and feel that it would be unbecoming my character to quit them at this moment."

It is clear from the letters which contain his most private thoughts, that Fox was utterly dispirited by the schism of 1793, and only persevered in the up-hill fight because he believed it was his duty to his country to do so. But the struggle, though manfully maintained, grew year by year more distasteful. His heart was ever at St. Ann's Hill when his bodily presence was at Westminster. "Here we are in this cursed place," he begins one letter from the manager's box in Westminster Hall, "very different from St. Ann's Hill or from Tivoli, where

perhaps you now are." Throughout the years 1793–94, his mind evidently recurred again and again to the discarded plan of 1784, and he positively longed to find an argument which would justify to his conscience a withdrawal from regular attendance in Parliament. In 1795 he discusses the question in a letter to Lord Holland, but most reluctantly decides that to quit public business would be too open to the misconstruction that—

"Having lost all hope of place, we left the country to take care of itself. I am so sure that secession is the measure a shabby fellow would take in our circumstances, that I think it can scarcely be right for us. But as for wishes, no man ever wished anything more."

As the years passed on, and the policy of the Ministry seemed to become more and more obstructive and tyrannical, and their position more and more assured, the cry for a secession from Parliament began to make itself heard among most of the Opposition leaders. Grey, impulsive and irritable, was anxious for it. Erskine and the Duke of Bedford were willing to try it, and Fox on personal grounds longed for it, but could not disabuse his mind of the idea that it was ill-advised. "He acquiesced in it," says Lord Holland, "more from indolence than from judgment." Eventually, a meeting was held in 1797, at which all the chiefs of the Opposition were present, and it was agreed by all, except Sheridan and Tierney, to leave Parliament if Grey's motion for Reform was thrown out. Fox was anxious that too much importance should not be attributed to the step. In the House he only spoke of devoting a larger portion of his time to his literary pursuits, and in a letter to Lord Holland he wrote:—

"Pray if you have an opportunity of talking about the Secession say what is the truth, that there was not agreement of opinion enough upon the subject to make it possible to take what one may call a measure

upon the subject, but that most of us thought that after the proposition for Reform we might fairly enough stay away, considering the preceding events of the Session and the behaviour of Parliament upon them."

Fox had warned his friends that if he once left Parliament it would be very difficult to get him back again, and so it proved. From May 26th, 1797, the day of Grey's motion, to March 3rd, 1806, the day on which he received office in the Ministry of all the talents, he only addressed the House nineteen times, while before the secession he had usually spoken more than that number of times in one year. There were, indeed, many reasons why he should prefer the quiet seclusion and lettered ease of St. Ann's to the turmoil of St. Stephen's. He was now getting well into middle age, had outgrown the passions and the excitement of youth, and was beginning to long for the full enjoyment of domestic peace congenial to his time of life. His marriage with Mrs. Armistead in 1795 had hallowed a love in which for many years he had found his chief delight. His letters are full of the most natural and tender allusion to her, which could only spring from the realisation through her of unalloyed domestic happiness. "If there ever was a place which might be called the seat of true happiness," he writes in 1794, "St Ann's is that place;" and again in 1795:—

"I am perfectly happy in the country, I have quite resources enough to employ my mind, and the great resource of all, literature, I am fonder of every day; and then the Lady of the Hill is one continual source of happiness to me. I believe few men, indeed, ever were so happy in that respect as I."

And in another letter:—

"I declare I think my affection for her increases every day. She is a comfort to me in every misfortune, and makes me to enjoy doubly every circumstance of life. There is to me a charm and a delight in her society, which time does not in the least wear off, and for real goodness of heart if she ever had her equal, she certainly never had a superior."

Besides his delight in his domestic life, his private affairs made Fox anxious if possible to avoid the expense of a house in London. Owing to the recklessness of his youth, and his natural indolence about money matters, he had always been in embarrassed circumstances, and usually owed a good deal of money to his friends. In 1787 he was as much as £5000 in debt to Coutts the banker; but in 1793, by the exertions of his political friends, a sum was raised sufficient to clear him from debt, and to purchase an annuity for him. Naturally, therefore, he was anxious not to get into embarrassments again, and exercised for the rest of his life the strictest economy in order to live within his means.

Attracted by the pleasures of home, and urged by the dictates of economy, Fox found another inducement to leave public life in the virulence of the attacks made upon him by the Tory press. No man, however even-spirited, can be wholly unaffected by continuous abuse, and Fox must have been all the more sensitive to the attacks made upon him because, unscrupulous as they were in their misrepresentation, many of them had some colour of excuse in his own folly. After the outbreak of the war, Fox was one of the best abused men in England. He was looked upon by a large section of the community as unpatriotic and untrustworthy, little better than a traitor. In Gillray's caricatures he figures as the leading member of the party who were conspiring with the French to overthrow the constitution of England, and establish in its place a republic on the French model. With the unerring instinct on such matters which is the life blood of the caricaturist, Fox is always the central figure, the head and front of the offending. Sheridan is the faithful henchman when anything more than usually extravagant is to be done, but he always plays a

subordinate, often a mean part. Stanhope, Erskine, Grey, fill up the picture, but it is upon Fox that attention is concentrated. It is he that is held up to the scorn and the hatred of patriots. It is he who is depicted as the arch-enemy of his country. To be caricatured by Gillray was a very different matter to an appearance in the pages of Mr. Punch. There is nothing of wit, of banter, of good temper, seldom even anything of the ludicrous in the acrid work of Gillray. The blows he directs are straight from the shoulder, deliberately brutal in conception, intended to inspire hatred, and to destroy reputation. We are so accustomed to the delicate handling of political caricature by Mr. Punch, to look under his guidance at the ludicrous side of serious politics, and to enjoy a laugh at the expense of both our friends and foes, that we are apt to forget what a terrible engine of misrepresentation and calumny political caricatures may become, if meant to hurt and not to amuse. Gillray is not the predecessor of Leech and Tenniel, he is the successor of Hogarth, a satirist of the school of Churchill, whose satires were all the more powerful because they were conveyed in pictures, and required no intellectual effort to be understood.

The popular idea of Fox is to this day largely formed upon a vague remembrance of Gillray's caricatures. We know him so well as Guy Fawkes, just about to apply the torch of the Rights of Man to the gunpowder, which was to blow up the King and House of Lords, when arrested by the searching gleam of Burke's lantern; or acting as headsman, with a mask on his face, at the execution of George III., while Sheridan holds the King's head steady for the stroke of the axe; or presenting the head of Pitt as the choice dish to be set before the demon of Revolution. After the war broke out, the

satire grew more virulent than ever. Fox was depicted at the night signal set up to draw the French fleet to the sack of London; as the agent of the French, smuggling provisions over to France, and so causing a famine in England; as the devotee before the images of Robespierre and Buonaparte at the shrine of St. Ann's Hill; as the French brigand soldier giving the death-stroke to King, Lords, and Commons. He was, as all his speeches show, exceedingly sensitive about the charge of holding republican sentiments. It was that, more than anything else, which goaded him on to the quarrel with Burke. After the quarrel he took great pains to explain the importance he attached to an aristocracy, and to announce his belief that no Government could be a fit one for British subjects to live under, which did not contain its due weight of aristocracy, as the proper poise of the Constitution. He had in fact an immense, almost superstitious love, for the British Constitution, with its system of checks and balances, with its due proportion of monarchical, aristocratical, and popular elements. It was of course not to be a fixed and stereotyped Constitution. The relations between the different elements required continual adjustment. It was always most necessary to take care that the popular element was not unduly suppressed, and the monarchical unduly prominent. It was to represent the whole nation and not only certain sections of the nation. But advocacy of a Republic, as even the ideally best form of Government, was wholly foreign to his mind. He had no sympathy whatever with the doctrines that the uneducated masses were collectively wiser than the educated few, or that universal suffrage flowed necessarily from the rights of man.

The fact was that he was so delighted at the overthrow of the *ancien régime*, that he did not scan narrowly the

principle upon which that overthrow proceeded. When enunciated in the vague form of abstract principles, such as Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, the Rights of Man, the Sovereignty of the People, he always found himself perfectly able to put an interpretation upon them absolutely consistent with his political creed. When different interpretations were put upon them in France, he lamented them as momentary aberrations, or justified them on the general ground of the liberty which must always be accorded to a nation to be allowed to know what is best for itself. He never grappled with the question whether there was not really a fundamental difference between the English and the French theory of liberty, and whether a democratic Republic was not the only political organisation which fully expressed the French theory? In answer to Burke's strictures upon the rights of man and the sovereignty of the people, he said that to attack them was to attack the British Constitution, for since the Hanoverian succession the British Constitution had depended upon the rights of men and the sovereignty of the people. An answer like that was possible in 1791, if the new constitution in France might be taken as an honest attempt to secure Parliamentary government with a constitutional King and a constitutional Church. It was not possible as a justification of the formula in 1798, after Jacobinism had, in its name and under its authority, swept away the Crown and the Church, and established universal suffrage. Yet after the Duke of Norfolk had been dismissed from his Lord Lieutenancy, for giving the toast of "The People Our Sovereign" at a complimentary dinner, Fox did not hesitate to go down to the Whig Club a few nights later and propose the same toast, justifying it on the ground that George III. owed his crown to the will of the people. To claim that a

constitutional meaning might be placed on the formula, at a moment when in the minds of every one in Europe it had become associated with the Jacobin principles of democracy, was either elaborate trifling or criminal folly. It was inevitable that men should take Fox at his word, judge of his opinions by the ordinary meaning of the words he used, and put him down as a Republican, since he chose to use, and go out of his way to justify, Republican sentiments. It was not to be wondered at if political opponents hurled at him the charge of unpatriotic conduct, and pictured him in league with England's enemies.

There was truth in the charge. As the war went on, ruinous and criminal as it was in his opinion, he wrote and he acted as no true patriot in a crisis of his country's fate should write and act. The Duke of Bedford, a staunch opponent of the war, subscribed £100,000 to the patriotic loan in 1796. Fox, on the other hand, took advantage of the mutiny at the Nore to embarrass the Ministers. As in the American war he had rejoiced over Saratoga and Yorktown, so now he rejoiced over French victories. In 1801, he writes to Grey, who had remonstrated with him:—

"The truth is, I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than perhaps you and the rest of my friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be avowed. The triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise."

When Fox was a young man, it happened that a criminal, bearing exactly the same name, was hanged. George Selwyn, who was a great friend of his, and had a passion for attending executions, was asked if he had been to the hanging of Fox. "No," said Selwyn; "I make a point of never attending rehearsals." The prophecy of the joke did not remain wholly unfulfilled. For more than ten years Fox was looked upon by the majority of

Englishmen as a criminal and a traitor at heart. Gillray drew a sketch to show that there was no hope for England until his head was treated French fashion, as the ornament for the top of a pike. His own indiscretion in conversation and letters deepened the general conviction. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that he fled from Parliament and politics, when the opportunity came, with the zest of a schoolboy flying from school.

At St. Ann's Hill Fox found the perfect rest which his tired nature most required, the loving tenderness which his warm affections so strongly demanded, the inner society of intimate friends, which is the real solace amid the anxieties of life to all generous natures, and, above all things, time, that inestimable boon to the bookish man, time that may be wasted in busy idleness. "When I am here," he says, in a phrase which goes straight to the heart of every man who knows what a holiday ought to be, "every hour and minute of idleness grows to have a double value, and as one knows one is so soon to have so little of it, one likes to enjoy it while it lasts pure and unmixed." What his idea of idleness was, we can easily see from a subsequent letter, where he says:—

"Mrs. A. tells me it is a long time since I wrote to you, I thought not; but yet I recollect that when I wrote last I was in the Ninth Book of the Odyssey, which I have since finished, and read eighteen books of Iliad, so that it must be a good while since."

The date of the letter shows that just over a month had elapsed. Thirty-three books of Homer in a month is no bad record for a man who thought of writing up over the door of his house—

> "How various his employments whom the world
> Calls idle."

St. Ann's was, indeed, a perfect place of retirement for the statesman, who, freed at last from the turmoil of

politics, was eagerly longing to devote the remainder of his life to literature. The house was small but comfortable, standing on the side of a hill which overlooked the Thames. About thirty acres of ground went with it, part of which was carefully planted and formed the garden and shrubbery, and part reaching up to the top of the hill was left to grow wild with heather and gorse. The garden was Fox's chief delight. He loved flowers and shrubs with an intensity which came only second to his love of Homer. He was his own gardener, and thoroughly understood the science of old-fashioned English gardening. Nothing gave him more unalloyed pleasure than an afternoon spent in training the honeysuckle and the roses, and deciding, with the help of Mrs. Fox, where to plant the new shrubs from the nursery. So fond was he of his garden that he made a catalogue in his own handwriting of all the flowers which grew in it. His life at this chosen home was equally characteristic in its simplicity, and forms a welcome contrast to the town life of earlier days. An early breakfast and the newspaper began the day. After breakfast an hour spent with Mrs. Fox in reading some Italian poet led to the more serious studies of the day, which lasted till dinner at three o'clock. These varied of course, according to the work upon which he was engaged, but they usually took the form of the critical study of some great poet. After dinner the care of the garden occupied him till tea, and when that was over, he generally worked at his projected history of the reign of James II. until bed-time came at half-past ten. Such was the ordinary routine of life at St. Ann's. Simplicity was its characteristic, love its inspiration, literature its occupation. Happiness reigned everywhere in the statesman's paradise, until politics, like sin, entered in to tempt and to destroy.

Literature was the serious work of Fox in his retirement. From his earliest youth he had acquired a love for poetry, and an admiration for the classics. His knowledge of the classical authors had often stood him in good stead among the vagaries of his youth, and amid his triumphs in Parliament. They had been both a solace and an amusement. But until now he had never had the opportunity of applying himself to the critical study of literature, and of comparing the authors of one age with those of another. That opportunity now presented itself, and he fastened on it with avidity. Fortunately, he numbered among his friends the three men who could best help him in his undertaking. In Dr. Parr, a Warwickshire clergyman, he found the width of reading and extent of knowledge in classical subjects, which could illustrate and explain any point which might arise. In Gilbert Wakefield, the Nonconformist and the Jacobin, lay hid an instinct for scholarship and an enthusiasm for classical literature which could make even questions of grammar interesting. From these Fox was content to learn; but in Lord Holland, his nephew, he found a pupil apt, thoughtful, and receptive, in whose independence of judgment he could rely, and to whom he was not afraid to pour out his crudest thoughts. Yet with his intense love for literature, Fox was extraordinarily limited in his grasp of it. He had no knowledge of philosophy, of law, or of political economy, and no great command of history. Poetry was the chief, almost the only object of his worship, and his knowledge of all the greater poets of the world (except of Germany) was intimate and profound. Poems of action pleased him more than poems of thought, and his affections, however widely they strayed, were sure to come back before long to the great epics of Homer and Virgil. His criticisms on poetry are always distinguished

by taste. He had an instinctive sense of what was proper and fitting, an instinctive loathing for what was unreal or overdone, and he never fell into the trap, so fatal to many a writer of the eighteenth century, of mistaking perfection of form for correctness of taste. In all that he writes there is a healthy manly vigour of mind which comes like a sea-breeze, before which falsity and affectation cannot live.

Among English poets, following his usual rule, Fox preferred the earlier to the later. Chaucer was his special favourite. "What a genius the man has," he exclaims. Spenser gave him more pleasure than Milton, partly, he confesses, because of his close relations with Italian poetry, but chiefly because the "Paradise Lost" seemed to him, in spite of grand and stupendous passages, to have "a want of flow, of ease, of what the painters call a free pencil." Shakespeare, strange to say, he never criticises, but in his occasional references to him assumes his superiority as unquestioned. Of more modern poets Dryden certainly is the one whom he admired most, especially in his imitative work. He had caught more, he thought, of the spirit of Juvenal in his satires, while Giffard, who had distinctly aimed at it, was unreadable. Pope was too artificial to please Fox's robust taste, nor were the subjects he treated such as to rouse any interest in one who, it must be confessed, delighted in something exciting and imaginative. Of Wordsworth he had no great opinion, which was a poor return for the poet's faithful admiration, but oddly enough he admired Cowper. His sympathy with the oppressed and his ardent love of peace made amends for his Methodism, and Fox frequently instanced the opening lines of "The Task" as among the finest poetry of the English language. Among foreign authors he gave the palm to Racine and Ariosto; the classical imitations of

the former, and the romantic grace of the latter especially charmed him.

"I observe," he writes to Lord Holland, "that Goodwin shows his stupidity in not admiring Racine. It puts me quite in a passion: 'je veux contre eux faire un jour un gros livre,' as Voltaire says. Even Dryden, who speaks with proper respect of Corneille and Molière, vilipends Racine. If ever I publish my edition of his works I will give it him for it, you may depend. What can you mean by saying there is little good of the new poetry of Cowper? What not the triplets to Mary? Not the verses about his early love in the first part? Not one of the sonnets? Not the Shipwreck or Outcast? Pray read them over again and repeat your former judgment, if you dare!"

But after all Fox's heart was in the classics, and his judgment upon modern poetry, in spite of his excellent taste, was somewhat warped by his great predilection for the classical models. That he did not appreciate religious and thoughtful poetry, and seems only to have seen in Dante and Milton a collection of brilliant and striking passages in a cumbersome and heavy setting, probably sprang largely from the sense that they were moving in a totally different sphere from the great classical poets. Want of connection and interest certainly seems to us a strange charge to bring against the "Divina Commedia," probably the most philosophically arranged poem in literature. Of the ancient writers the Greeks were to his mind far superior to the Romans. Among the many Latin poets whom he admits having read, he only singles out for special praise Ovid and Virgil. The Odes of Horace pleased him for their grace and sweetness of versification, but he does not mention the Satires or the Epistles. In Greek dramatic poetry he had read only two plays of Æschylus and nothing of Aristophanes; but Euripides he greatly admired, and more than once recommended a study of him as the best training for a public speaker.

"He appears to me," he says to Colonel Trotter, "to have much more of facility and nature in his way of writing than Sophocles. Of all Sophocles' plays I like Electra clearly the best. In the Antigone there is a passage in her answer to Creon that is perhaps the sublimest in the world. I suppose you selected Hipp. and Iph. in Aulis on account of Racine; and I hope you have observed with what extreme judgment he had imitated them. In the character of Hipp. only I think has he fallen short of his original. The scene of Phædra's discovery of her love to her nurse he has imitated pretty closely, and if he has not surpassed it, it is only because that was impossible."

Homer and Virgil were the subjects of his minutest and most constant study. He once read through the Odyssey for the purpose of noting any peculiarities in prosody, with the triumphant result that there was only "one line (and I do not know what that is) which I could not reconcile to the common rules." His correspondence with Mr. Wakefield mainly turns upon points of Homeric prosody and philology. It is worth notice that the parts which attracted him most were those which appealed to the affections and to family relations. In the Iliad nothing pleased him more than the brotherly feeling between Agamemnon and Menelaus, and the amiable character of Menelaus, "whom Homer, by the way," he says, "seems to be particularly fond of." The interview between Priam and Achilles, where the old man unattended seeks the Grecian ships and with his arms

> "Embraced those knees, and kissed those fearful hands
> Bloodstained, which many of his sons hath slain!"

entreating Achilles to grant him Hector's body, that it might receive due funeral rites—

> "For thy father's sake look pitying down
> On me more needing pity; since I bear
> Such grief as never man on earth hath borne,
> Who stoop to kiss the hands that slew my son"—

he pronounces to be the finest passage of the whole poem.

He constantly refers to the description of the anxious family council among the Greek leaders at the beginning of the Tenth Book as being particularly fine.

"If you will not read the Iliad through," he writes to Lord Holland, in 1797, "pray read the Tenth Book, or rather the first half of it. It is a part I never heard particularly celebrated; but I think the beginning of it more true in the description of the uneasiness in the Greek army, and the solicitude of the different chiefs, than anything almost in the poem. It is one of those things which one cannot give an idea of by any particular quotation, but which is excellent beyond measure in placing the scene exactly before one's eyes; and the characters, too, are remarkably well distinguished and preserved. I think Homer always happy in his accounts of Menelaus, remarkably so, you know, in the Odyssey: but I think he is so always, and in this place too particularly. You see I have never done with Homer, and, indeed, if there was nothing else except Virgil and Ariosto, one should never want reading."

If Homer was the poet Fox admired most, Virgil was the poet whom he loved. He loved him all the more because he was so distinctly on a lower level than Homer, and yet so consummate an artist. "Read him," he says in one place, "until you get to love him for his very faults." Fox, too, had one point in common with Virgil which he could not have with Homer—he was a great defender of imitation on principle, and in Virgil's works he found plenty of argument for his favourite thesis. Once he read the Fourth Book of the Æneid through, marking carefully all the passages which were borrowed, and was delighted to find that they were nearly all greatly improved by their transplantation. In Wakefield he found a supporter of his theory, and he writes to him in great delight:—

"Your notion with respect to poets borrowing from one another seems almost to come up to mine, who have often been laughed at by my friends as a systematic defender of plagiarism. Indeed, I got Lord Holland, when a school-boy, to write some verses in praise of it, and in truth it appears to me that the greatest poets have been the most guilty, if guilt there be in such matters."

His favourite passages in Virgil as in Homer were in the episodes rather than in the main texture of the work. The story of Nisus and Euryalus, the address of Evander to Pallas, the episode of Dido, were the parts which he loved best. Of Æneas himself he had a very just contempt, and wonders if Virgil really intended anything else. In a letter to Wakefield, written in 1801, he thus sums up his opinion upon Virgil:—

"The verses you refer to are indeed delightful; indeed, I think that sort of pathetic is Virgil's great excellence in the Æneid, and in that way he surpasses all other poets of every age and nation, except perhaps (and only perhaps) Shakespeare. It is on that account that I rank him so very high, for surely to excel in that style which speaks to the heart is the greatest of all excellence. I am glad you mention the Eighth Book as one of those which you most admire. It has always been a peculiar favourite with me—Evander's speech upon parting with his son is, I think, the most beautiful thing in the whole, and is, as far as I know, wholly unborrowed. What is more remarkable is, that it has not, I believe, been often attempted to be imitated. . . . The passage, 'Sin aliquem infandum casum' is nature itself. And then the tenderness in turning towards Pallas: 'Dum te care puer,' &c. In short, it has always appeared to me divine. On the other hand, I am surprised and sorry that among the capital books you should omit the Fourth. All that part of Dido's speech that follows Num fletu ingemuit nostro? is surely in the highest style of excellence, as well as the description of her last impotent efforts to retain Æneas, and of the dreariness of her situation after his departure"

In a letter to Mr. Trotter he gives the other side of the picture.

"Though the detached parts of the Æneid appear to me to be equal to anything, the story and characters appear more faulty every time I read it. My chief objection (I mean to the character of Æneas) is of course not so much felt in the first three books; but afterwards he is always either insipid or odious, sometimes excites interest against him, and never for him. One thing which delights me in the Iliad and Odyssey, of which there is nothing in Virgil, is the picture of manners, which seem to be so truly delineated. The times at which Homer lived undoubtedly gave him a great advantage in this respect, since from his nearness to the times of which he writes what we always see to be invention in Virgil appears like the plain truth in Homer. But exclusive of this advantage, Homer certainly attends to character more than his imitator."

Then he adds in his postscript, "Even in the First Book Æneas says, 'Sum pius Æneas famâ super æthera notus.' Can you bear this?"

Criticism of this sort might be multiplied from Fox's correspondence almost without limit. His range of reading in his special department of poetry was exceedingly wide, and he brought to the study of classical poetry a taste trained in the best school of scholarship which but rarely failed him when dealing with the literature of later times. His strong, vigorous, and clear intellect gives a turn of sound common sense to all his opinions. He has the faculty, so rare and so precious in a literary critic, of self-restraint. Enthusiastic he always is, but he never permits himself to gush. Yet, in spite of the sound judgment, the powerful mind, the clear statement, the trained taste, the self-restrained method, the subdued enthusiasm which appear in every line of his letters or literary subjects, it is impossible not to feel that there is something wanting. His judgment on poets does not, it is true, deal only with the outside, with the form and the expression, yet it does not pierce into the inside. He fastens upon passages, episodes, scenes, and criticises them. He never deals with a great work as a whole, or attempts to penetrate into the motives which produced it, and the circumstance which moulded it. He is always interesting, never profound, always tasteful, never intellectual. He criticises each author, as he studies him, from the standpoint of his own personality. He judges him by his own likes and dislikes; he looks for the passages which, by their tender sentiment, their true sympathy, their artistic management, fall in with his own feelings and appeal to his own nature. He never tries to put himself into his author's place, and try to realise how his work appeared to him, and what it was meant to be.

Perhaps the conditions under which he wrote his criticisms did not admit of this. It is too much to expect that a statesman, who is able to devote but the fag-end of a busy life to the claims of literature, and from circumstances throws most of his literary criticism into letter form, should do more than bring the force of a vigorous understanding and a trained taste to bear upon the art-work of his favourite authors. Yet the complete failure of his own literary effort, the "History of James II.," gives rise to the suspicion that his defects lay deeper than in the outward circumstances of his life. He lived, it is true, at a peculiarly unfortunate time for a literary critic who had not the opportunity of being original. At the time when his literary tastes were forming, there was no school of English poetry worth the name. The old artificial school of Pope had become so thin and attenuated as to be scarcely visible. The romantic and imaginative school inspired by the French Revolution was hardly born before Fox's death, the intellectual school of modern days was yet to be. For a literary prophet it was perhaps an opportunity, but prophets are rare in literature as elsewhere, and certainly there was not in Fox enough of moral stamina or of intellectual depth to make one.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINISTRY OF ALL THE TALENTS.

THE unexpected resignation of Pitt at the beginning of 1801 put an end to the idyll of St. Ann's. At once, of course, there was a ferment among the Opposition, and rumours of all sorts began to fly about. Gradually, however, the truth came out and every one began to feel disappointed. Fox at first could not understand it. He thought there must be something behind, some dark intrigue, or, as he expressed it, "a notorious juggle." The substitution of Addington for Pitt could only be believed on the principle *quia incredibile.* In reality, it was only one of the King's party triumphs, carried a little further than he or his Minister intended. Pitt had begun at last to realise the necessity of peace, but he had not yet schooled himself into the determination to propose it. He had promised to the Roman Catholics of Ireland complete freedom from religious disability in return for their support of the Union; but he had not yet nerved himself to the effort of obtaining the King's consent to introduce the measure. When he did begin to lay siege to that fortress, he found it well manned and armed at all points, thanks to the diligent care of Lords Loughborough and Auckland. George III. had got firm hold,

in his narrow but singularly honest mind, of the conviction that to grant Catholic Emancipation was contrary to his Coronation oath, and the Ahitophel was not born who by argument or by guile could move him from that position. Pitt's pledges to the Irish were too distinct and stubborn to be got rid of wholesale, and so there was nothing for it but a resignation, which was equally distasteful to the King and to the Minister. The fruits of victory, however, lay with the King. He found in Addington and Eldon Ministers after his own heart, honest, stupid, and accommodating. A slight return of his old complaint, occasioned by the anxiety of changing his Ministers, redoubled his popularity, and brought Pitt to his knees. He consented to withdraw the question of Catholic Emancipation during the King's lifetime; and so George III. found himself in the hands of a Minister, whom he regarded with more perfect confidence than any Minister since North, and able, if necessary, to recall the most popular and trusted statesman in England to his councils on his own terms, whenever he chose to do so.

To Fox the change was of little practical importance. Pitt supported Addington, looking upon him merely as a stop-gap until such time as it might be convenient for him to resume the cares of office, and the majority followed Pitt. It was thought worth while, on the part of the Opposition, to muster their forces and challenge the new Ministry on their formation; but they were beaten by nearly three to one, and though Fox appeared at Westminster on this occasion, and craved in his speech the usual privilege given to a new Member, he did not yet consider the secession as over. The first work of the new Ministry was the negotiation of the peace with France. That was a measure upon which there were not wo opinions in the whole of England, and while that was

in progress all party warfare was hushed. In the autumn the treaty was concluded, and accepted by Parliament and the nation with enthusiastic joy, and so the curtain fell on the first act of the great war drama. Fox immediately determined to seize the opportunity to pay a visit to Paris, partly to collect materials for his history, and partly to see for himself the victorious general who had, as Fox expressed it, "like most military men, reformed the country by taking the power into his own hands."

On his return he found the Ministers in a most anomalous condition. One section of Pitt's old majority, led by the Grenvilles, had declared strongly against the peace, and directed a furious onslaught upon Addington on the terms of the Treaty. The Whigs, on the other hand, were overjoyed at the peace, and supported the Government staunchly when that was in danger. On all other matters, of course, they could have nothing in common with an administration formed on a purely reactionary basis. Pitt, who still held the strings in his own hands, and might have forced himself upon the King whenever he pleased, withdrew altogether from Parliament, though it was understood that he gave a qualified support to the Ministry. A state of affairs like this clearly could not last long. It was necessary for the Whigs to keep a sharp eye upon what was going on, and Fox could no longer resist the importunities of his friends to put a formal end to the ill-advised secession. On June 27th, 1802, in a letter to Lauderdale, he reluctantly gave it its *coup de grâce*—"I have at last made up my mind to come in, not convinced by reason, but finding the wish among my friends so general; I am sure I am wrong, but I cannot go against the tide."

The crisis was, indeed, one which demanded that the

country should have the benefit of the counsel of all true patriots. She was on the verge of a war with the greatest military genius whom the world has ever seen, while her affairs were directed by a crazy King and an incapable Minister, and the two ablest men in England were sulking in their respective tents. Buonaparte had never intended the peace of Amiens to be anything else than a breathing-space. As he frankly confessed to M. Gallois a few months later, his power in France was not sufficiently consolidated, nor was his ambition sufficiently satisfied, to permit him to allow such a splendid weapon as the army of France to rust in disuse. He used the peace of Amiens, just as Louis XIV. had used the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle and the peace of Nimeguen, simply as a period of quiet in which he could prepare for the next move in the game of ambition. During the latter part of the year 1802 despatch after despatch, each treading on the heels of its predecessor, came pouring in upon the British Government, bringing news of fresh French aggressions. In August Buonaparte seized upon Elba, in October upon Parma and Piacenza, a few weeks later he occupied Switzerland. He demanded from the English Government the expulsion of the emigrants, the banishment of the Bourbon princes, the suppression of newspapers hostile to himself. Finally, in January, 1803, he published a report of Colonel Sebastiani upon Egypt, the object of which was to show how easily it could be reconquered. In fact, by the time the campaigning season of 1803 had begun, he had made all his preparations and was ready for action. All that remained was to bring about a declaration of war upon a point which should put England technically in the wrong. The feeble Government, under its pompous and stupid head, did all it could to second his efforts. Without ever laying

before Europe a remonstrance against the obvious aggressions of France, Addington called out the Militia in March, 1803, and thus enabled Buonaparte, at the celebrated interview with Lord Whitworth which followed, to represent England as showing a desire for war. By refusing to restore Malta to the Knights of St. John, he allowed the quarrel nominally to arise out of an infraction of the treaty of Amiens by the English Government. Well might Fox say: "Addington by his folly has contrived to lay bare the injustice of our cause."

Directly it became clear that the country was drifting again into war, a determined effort was made to put the helm of state into more secure hands. Lord Grenville, who perhaps alone among English statesmen fully realised the character and genius of Buonaparte, was anxious to form a Ministry on a broad bottom, which should include both Pitt and Fox. Canning and the younger followers of Pitt, with whom were the bulk of the nation, looked upon Pitt as the only man capable of steering the country safely through the perils which encompassed her. The wits turned their batteries upon Addington and tried fairly to laugh him out of office. Never was Minister more unmercifully ridiculed. Endless were the jests pointed at his father's profession. "The Medici Administration," they called it. "The Pills for himself and the Pells for his son," they sang, when the valuable sinecure of the Clerk of the Pells was kept in the family.

> "As London is to Paddington,
> So is Pitt to Addington,"

was the less good-humoured comparison of Canning. But the Minister, wrapped up in sublime self-conceit, was impervious to argument or witticism. He was quite acute enough to know that the royal favour was his, and his alone;

and trusting to that he could afford to treat even Pitt with some degree of independence. When war became unavoidable, he actually had the impertinence to think that he could make his own terms with Pitt. Through the instrumentality of Dundas, now Lord Melville, he proposed that Lord Chatham should become the nominal leader of a coalition between Pitt and himself, but stipulated as an essential condition for the exclusion of the Grenvilles. He was speedily undeceived. Pitt put a summary stop to the negotiation. "I really had not the curiosity to inquire what I was to be," he said afterwards to a friend. Addington, nothing disconcerted, declared war on the 16th of May, and to mark the occasion came down to Parliament dressed in full Windsor uniform. Unfortunately for his dignity the business before the House at that very moment was the Medicine Bill. The House, of course, at once saw the joke, and a roar of laughter greeted the martial appearance of "the Doctor," which broke out again irrepressibly as Sheridan, in his best manner, alluded to him as the "right honourable gentleman who has appeared this evening in the character of a sheep in wolf's clothing."

The debate of the 23rd of May on the policy of the war, showed the strange divisions of parties at the time. Pitt, Fox, and Grenville were all personally opposed to Addington on the ground of his incapacity. Pitt, nevertheless, supported the Minister in his war policy, and made one of his most brilliant speeches in his favour. Grenville, too, was eager for war, but far too virulent against Addington to support his conduct of it. Fox, though he thought war inevitable, yet clung fondly to a hope that Buonaparte was not really so ambitious and unscrupulous as he was thought to be, and steadily maintained that if the negotiations had been better conducted, peace might

have been preserved. In this, however, some of his followers, notably Grey, seem to have disagreed with him. When once war had been declared all parties agreed that it must be carried on vigorously, and Lord Grenville approached Fox to see if they could not find a ground for common action, if not for coalition, in their common opposition to the Minister. After some negotiation, which mainly passed through the hands of Thomas Grenville, Fox's old friend and agent in 1782, an agreement for common opposition was arrived at. Efforts were made to get Pitt to join; but he, though reserving to himself full liberty to question and criticise any measures of the Ministers which seemed to him to be bad or wanting in vigour, would not definitely range himself on the side of the Opposition. He saw clearly enough that he had the game in his own hands if he waited, and did not want to be encumbered by ties which might prove inconvenient. The event proved that he was right. The relations between Grenville and Fox grew closer. The Opposition grew stronger and more consolidated as the months crept on. When Pitt chose to oppose the Ministry, their majority was doubtful; when he supported it, it was assured. Slowly, however, it dwindled away. Eventually by April, 1804, it was reduced to 36. Addington resigned, and Pitt resumed office, with the acquiescence of the King and the support of the vast majority of the country, wholly unfettered by any promises to Grenville or to Fox.

At last there seemed a chance that the nation, as she was entering on the crisis of her fortunes in the death struggle with France, might be able to gather to her assistance all the talent in her service. The war of 1803 was a very different one to that of 1793. No one could pretend that it was a war against opinion, or a war of sheer unmanly terror, least of all a war to restore the

ancien régime. Whatever had been the case in 1793, no one doubted now that the cause of Buonaparte was the cause of absolutism and tyranny, and the cause of England was the cause of liberty. Military despotism was no new danger to Europe, no new factor in English politics. Among the noblest of England's claims to the gratitude of Europe, was the remembrance of the part which she had played in breaking the European tyranny of Louis XIV. But Louis, at any rate, was the representative of a great tradition, had a definite national policy, and was in his own way a champion of civilisation as well as of despotism. The ambition of Buonaparte on the contrary was personal, not national. His tyranny represented nothing but his own sword, it rested purely and nakedly on force. What enemy of the human race could be imagined more deadly than a military adventurer, cruel, faithless, and unscrupulous, gifted with extraordinary talents, restrained by no law human or Divine, who looked upon human beings simply as the playthings of his ambition, upon nations as ministers to his glory? Fox perhaps was the only statesman in England who was still inclined to hope, who still believed that the ogre might be tamed by dexterous treatment; but neither he nor any one else denied for a moment the absolute duty of England to spend her last man and her last shilling in the cause of the liberation of Europe, should Buonaparte prove the tyrant which his enemies believed him to be.

Once more the best hopes of England were doomed to be wrecked by the narrow-minded honesty of the King. To George III., Addington was still the best Minister he had ever had, Fox was still the unprincipled roué who had taught his son to hate him. George III. had enough Stewart blood in his veins to learn nothing and to forget nothing. Directly Pitt proposed to him a Coalition

Ministry, a Ministry in fact of the national defence, wholly apart from party, which was to include Fox, Grenville, Fitzwilliam, Grey, and Canning, the King resolutely refused to agree to Fox. On hearing this, Fox, with characteristic good temper, at once asked not to have his own claims pressed, but insisted on the inclusion of some of his followers, if it was in any real sense to be a Coalition Ministry. His followers, with equally characteristic loyalty, refused to serve if their chief was not to lead them; and the Grenvilles, true to their policy of co-operation with the Whigs, refused to join unless the Whigs came in too.

The result was that the King was victorious all along the line. "Never in any conversation that I have had with him has he so baffled me," said Pitt. The old Ministry of incapables was reconstituted, but with the addition of Pitt and Dundas; the old policy of organising coalitions against France with English gold was taken up, and Sisyphus began once more to roll the stone up the hill. All that zeal could do was done. The record of Pitt's second Ministry is a noble story of energy and vigour, unsuccessful though it was. The threat of invasion roused the patriotism of every Englishman, and defences not formidable in themselves, but useful in quieting apprehension, sprung up on the coast of Kent. Lord Melville worked so hard at the reorganisation of the fleet that it is said he added no less than one hundred and sixty-six vessels to the navy in a year. The principle of the conscription for national defence was introduced by the Additional Forces Bill. Abroad the murder of the duc d'Enghien, the assumption of the title of Emperor by Napoleon, his virtual annexation of Italy, Holland, and Switzerland, were powerful arguments in Pitt's favour, and by April, 1805, he had the satisfaction of seeing Austria and

Russia again allied against the tyrant. In August, 1805, the superiority of Nelson and Calder over Villeneuve at sea effectually relieved England of any fear of invasion. The victory of Trafalgar in October annihilated the French navy for the rest of the war. But in all other respects the story is one of continued disaster. Pitt's own health was breaking down under the strain. He spoke at times with his old fire, but the effort became visibly greater. The attack upon Lord Melville for malversation, carried in the House of Commons by the Speaker's casting vote, simply broke his heart. The news of the capitulation of Ulm, and the total failure of the coalition at Austerlitz, brought him to his grave. On January 23rd, 1806, he died, murmuring, it is said, with his last breath a prayer for his country.

The death of Pitt left literally no one in England to take his place except Fox and Grenville. Pitt and Melville had been the only able men in the Cabinet. Addington had been tried and found wanting, and it was impossible even for the King to explore the depths of the kingdom of dulness which stretched below the feet of Addington. He fully understood the state of affairs, sent for Lord Grenville and entrusted the government to him. Grenville at once replied that the first person he should consult would be Fox. "I understood it to be so," said the King, "and I meant it to be so." Not two years before George III. had taken care to let it be known that Fox had been excluded from the Ministry by the King's personal action, but a few months previous he had written that he would run the risk of civil war rather than admit Fox. No one knew better than George III. when opposition was hopeless. He struggled to the very end, but always gave way when it was absolutely necessary, and so it was in this case. After an interval of twenty-

three years, Fox again kissed his hands on his appointment as Foreign Secretary, and in no period of his life in which he had been Minister did he find the King more cordial and accommodating.

The Ministry of All the Talents, as that of Grenville and Fox was called by the wits, was based upon the idea long urged by the Grenvilles, that in a combination of parties alone could be found sufficient national strength to withstand Napoleon. But the nomination of Fox as Foreign Secretary of course implied that an attempt to restore peace would at once be made. Fox had always maintained that Napoleon did not really wish for the renewal of war. His objects, Fox thought, at that time were mainly to consolidate his own power in France, and had the English Ministers met him straightforwardly, and shown them that they had no intention of disturbing his authority at home, he would have manifested a very different disposition towards England. Napoleon, when First Consul, had either taken a great fancy to Fox, or he had thought it prudent to try and make so influential a man his friend, and Fox could not bring himself to believe that one, who had treated him so courteously and so openly, could really be playing a double game. He had hardly settled himself in his new office when an opportunity for opening negotiations presented itself. A man called on Fox and detailed to him a plan for the Emperor's assassination. Fox, in a tempest of indignation, drove him from the room, and at once acquainted Napoleon with the plot. Probably he might have saved himself the trouble, as there is good reason to suppose that the whole thing was concocted by Talleyrand. However this may be, it answered the purpose. A friendly speech of the Emperor's was forwarded to Fox, and negotiations began. At first they were carried on between Fox and

Talleyrand, a little later Lord Yarmouth, who was one of the Englishmen seized by Buonaparte on the outbreak of the war, was used as agent, and eventually Lauderdale was sent as full plenipotentiary.

It did not make much difference through whose hands the negotiations passed. Napoleon was at that time busily engaged in mapping out central Europe afresh, with the double object of consolidating his own authority, and of bringing the whole of Europe to bear upon England in order to crush her trade. The only question really was, how long it would take Fox to find this out? By the summer he still had hopes of an accommodation, but they had become very faint, as Napoleon, in spite of his promise to the contrary, had annexed Sicily to the new kingdom of Naples—created for his brother Joseph—and by the formation of the Confederation of the Rhine had broken his engagement to Yarmouth that the constitution of Germany should not be altered. Fox, whose health was beginning to break down, hoped to hand over the Foreign Office to his nephew Lord Holland directly the negotiation was finished, and a conversation between them, which occurred at this time, shows that he had practically given up all hope of peace.

"We can," he says, "in honour do nothing without the full and *bonâ fide* consent of the Queen and Court of Naples; but even exclusive of that consideration and of the great importance of Sicily which you, young one, very much underrate, it is not so much the value of the point in dispute as the manner in which the French fly from their word that disheartens me. It is not Sicily, but the shuffling, insincere way in which they act, that shows me that they are playing a false game; and in that case it would be very imprudent to make any concessions, which by any possibility could be thought inconsistent with our honour, or could furnish our allies with a plausible pretence for suspecting, reproaching, or deserting us."

The negotiations did not actually cease till after Fox's

death, but it is evident from this letter that Grey did not much misrepresent Fox's opinion when, a few months later, he said: "There never was any opportunity of procuring any such terms as would have been adequate to the just pretensions, and consistent with the honour and interests of this country." Fox had always maintained that the chances of peace and war depended entirely upon the good faith of Napoleon. He had always persuaded himself that Napoleon was actuated more by patriotism than by ambition. Seven months of negotiation disabused him of this idea, and before his death he had sorrowfully reached the conclusion that war was not only unavoidable but desirable as long as Napoleon claimed the right to ride roughshod over the liberties of Europe.

If Fox could not restore peace to Europe, he could do something at least to remove from England the stain of an unnatural and cruel traffic. He was not the man to reckon up the magnitude of the interests affected, when he was called upon to do an act of simple justice to suffering humanity. Year after year, as long as he attended Parliament, his voice had been raised against the detestable trade in slaves, and now that he had the power, he at once seized the opportunity of showing that his sympathy, unlike that of Pitt, was not confined to words. In June, 1806, Fox pledged himself to introduce a measure of total abolition. It was his last speech in Parliament. He did not live to carry out his pledge, but the bill drawn on the lines which he had sketched out, was introduced by Grey in January, and became law in March, 1807. By it the trade in negroes was absolutely forbidden to British subjects after January 1st, 1808. Three years later it was made a felony to take part in it. So was accomplished this great act of social reform, which Fox had strenuously urged for so many

years in apparently hopeless opposition, but which he was not permitted to see pass into law.

The end came very quickly. In January 1806 he accepted office, and set about the work of his department with unabated energy; but his attendance at the House, and his anxiety about the peace and the abolition of the slave trade soon told on him, and he determined to give up the seals to Lord Holland directly those questions were settled. "Don't think me selfish, young one," he wrote, "the slave trade and peace are such glorious things I can't give them up, even to you." In June, however, came a change for the worse. His malady was now declared to be dropsy, and he was obliged to give up all business. It soon became so serious that operations had to be resorted to for his relief, and he, as well as his wife and friends, understood that the end could not be far off. At the beginning of September he rallied a little, and was removed to Chiswick, but on the 7th he began plainly to get weaker. Lord Holland and General Fitzpatrick, who were always with him, read to him constantly. It was his great delight. Virgil, Dryden, and Crabbe were the authors he asked for oftenest, and his favourite passages of Virgil were read and re-read, as if he could not bring himself to part with so old a friend. At length he became too weak to understand what was read, and during the morning of the 13th of September he lay motionless and almost unconscious, with a sweet smile of happiness on his face. At last, at six in the evening, he passed away, sinking to rest quite quietly and peacefully, surrounded by those whom he loved best in the whole world, undisturbed by anxious thought or touch of pain.

Sir Walter Scott, in the well-known lines of the prelude to "Marmion," has given lasting expression to the thought which was uppermost in the minds of most Englishmen

when they heard of the death of Fox. It was that of thankfulness that one, who was in so many things essentially English, should at last be found acting in harmony with the bulk of his countrymen on the great subject of the day. Yet it may be questioned whether praise thus limited did not really do an injustice to Fox's memory? It implied a want of patriotism in previous years, which, if true, would be most detrimental to his character as a statesman. It suggested a fault in his nature which his friends certainly would have most energetically repudiated. Those who look upon Fox as having anything foreign in his sympathies or turn of mind, totally misread his character. He was English to the backbone, a product of the England of the eighteenth century just as typical as was Pitt, though representative of a different type. There was nothing in him of the finesse of a Frenchman, of the suppleness of an Italian, of the brutality of a German. His love of home, his simplicity of life, his straightforward directness of speech and thought, his stubbornness of will, his steadfastness of affection, his very indolence, and yet the sense of duty which obliged him to work against his will, were all qualities essentially English. It was because he was so essentially English that he acquired the hold which he did over the country. Men recognised instinctively that he was one of themselves. They could understand him. In his good qualities and his bad qualities there was nothing outside the sphere in which they themselves moved. It was just because they knew him so well that they hated him so relentlessly or loved him so passionately. Even his worst enemies, those who really believed that he wished to establish a republic in England on the Jacobin model, never accused him of hitting below the belt. They knew perfectly well what they had to meet, the

war between them was open and above board. What Fox meant he said, and he did not mean any more than he said. As a matter of fact he usually meant a great deal less. In the most truculent attacks which were made upon him, such as those of Gillray, there was nothing kept in reserve, no suggestion of things worse than what appeared, no allusions to dark designs which were not avowed. It was a fair stand-up fight on both sides, conducted according to the most approved principle of the English prize ring.

The attacks on Fox in this respect are very different to those directed against his father. Compare Gillray's caricature of Fox cutting off the head of George III. with Gray's venomous lines on Lord Holland at Kingsgate:—

"Old and abandoned by each venal friend,
Here Holland formed the pious resolution
To smuggle a few years, and strive to mend
A broken character and constitution.

'Ah,' said the sighing peer, 'had Bute been true,
Nor Mungo's, Rigby's, Bradshaw's friendship vain,
Far better scenes than these had blest our view,
And realised the beauties which we feign.'

Purged by the sword and purified by fire,
Then had we seen proud London's hated walls;
Owls would have hooted in St. Peter's choir,
And foxes stunk and littered in St. Paul's."

Or compare again the spirit which attached to Shelburne the name and characteristics of Malagrida with the wave of popular feeling which deprived Fox of his majority in 1784. In the one there is the distrust which is born of fear, and which is all the more formidable because it cannot easily be explained, because it is felt rather than expressed; the other was the distrust of a healthy moral sentiment, which punished appropriately what it considered

to be an obvious outrage to political morality. To most Englishmen undoubtedly, the support given by Fox to the French Revolution was a severe shock. They were at that time too much under the influence of fear themselves to be able to judge impartially of the conduct of one who, on the contrary, was inspired, not by fear, but by sympathy; and he was too much of a partisan to make allowance for their prejudices. The judgment passed on both sides was much too harsh. Party feeling became more exacerbated than it had ever been before, and yet even in the height of the flood of public opinion which overwhelmed him, in spite of all the abuse which was showered upon him, no one really could bring himself to believe that Fox had set himself to destroy the institutions of his country. They believed him to be wrong, but they believed him to be honest, and when the time came for him to stand forward in their behalf against Napoleonic aggression, they rejoiced, not because the prodigal had returned home from the Jacobin swine troughs, but because the line of patriotic duty as understood by Whig and Tory had converged in common action for their country's good.

The question then naturally arises, Is there in the public life of Fox any evidence that he had a distinct political ideal, which he followed as consistently as his circumstances and his temperament admitted? Was this patriotism, which it is now on all hands acknowledged that he possessed, a vague sentiment or a considered policy? The circumstances of Fox's political life almost forbid a direct answer to the question. It is the business of an Opposition to oppose, and no one expects that the attack will always be made from the same quarter or in the same way. By the conventions of politics a good deal of latitude is allowed to an Opposition, both as to the principles they lay down, and the arguments they use. It

is when a statesman or a party is in office that their political ideal is seen, and Fox never while in office had any chance whatever of carrying political principles into legislation, except in his India Bill, which did not pass. In 1782 and 1806 his time was almost entirely occupied with negotiations for peace. His political principles, therefore, have to be drawn mainly not from what he did do, but from what he blamed others for not doing, which is a test far more severe than that applied to any other great statesman of the century, and which, if applied to modern statesmen—"who would escape whipping?"

Fox himself steadily maintained throughout his career a consistent appeal to Whig principles as the kernel of his political faith. He rarely made a speech in the House of Commons in which he did not profess his intense, almost blind admiration for the British Constitution; but these were phrases which by the end of the eighteenth century had become little more than phrases. To a politician of Walpole's day, Whig principles meant distinctly the supremacy of Parliament over the prerogative, party government, and religious toleration. It was summed up in the motto of the Revolution of 1688—Civil and Religious Liberty. The British Constitution had an equally distinct meaning. It meant a government in which political power was divided between the Crown, the Ministers, and Parliament, but in which the aristocracy had the real ascendency. But by the end of the eighteenth century the phrases understood in this sense had become unreal. No Tory, however reactionary, thought of disputing the supremacy of Parliament, the necessity of party government, or the advisability of religious toleration; and although opinions differed as to the exact limits which should be placed on the influence of the Crown, or of the people, in the government, no one

doubted that the chief control should be vested in the aristocracy. Thirty years later, on the contrary, they had again become intensely real. They had acquired a new meaning. In the cold shade of opposition the Whig party had learned the doctrines of Free Trade from Adam Smith, and of Utilitarianism from Bentham; they had seized Parliamentary Reform from the nerveless hands of Pitt, and in the mouths of Grey and of Russell and of Althorp, these time-honoured phrases meant the ousting of the Crown from political power, the supremacy of the middle classes, the domination of commercial objects in politics, and religious equality.

Fox bridges over the gulf which separates these two conceptions of Whig principles. He it is who enables the programme of 1832 to be carried out by the same party which was overthrown by George III. in 1770. He it is who forms the link between Rockingham and Burdett. And the very indefiniteness of his own views, the fact that sentiment entered so largely into his political judgments, enabled him to discharge the function with the greater ease. He brought to the work of politics the talents of an orator, rather than of a statesman, and he never made any definite scheme his own for placing the government of the country upon a more popular basis. He had in fact no enlarged conceptions of politics. He was too indolent to work out problems for posterity to settle. He was content to deal with the present, with the resources which the present supplied. He never laid before Parliament on any subject a carefully reasoned out scheme of political conduct, based upon principle and applied to the facts in question, except the India Bill, and it must always be doubtful how much of the India Bill was due to the inspiration of Burke. Hard political thinking he invariably avoided. In the American War

he could denounce the folly of the Ministry and demand the acknowledgment of independence, but he never had any scheme of his own to propound based upon a reasonable theory of colonial politics. He could cut the Gordian knot, but not untie it. The same thing is observable in his struggle with Pitt in 1784. He could denounce in Parliament the unconstitutional appointment of the Ministers, he never could outvote them on questions of confidence, but he attempted to present his case to the constituencies, who after all must be eventually the arbiters, as one between the prerogative and the independence of Parliament. The same defect is still more conspicuous in his way of dealing with the war of 1793. Again and again he attacked Pitt for not making clear the object of the war, and sought accordingly to prove that it must be either a war against opinion, or a war to restore the Bourbons. But he on his side never had any clear idea of the principle on which friendly relations with France could be maintained. He admitted that the violation of the Scheldt was a necessary cause of war by treaty, if the Dutch chose to make it so. He allowed that the French proclamation, inciting rebellion in monarchical countries, could not be passed over without demanding an explanation. But he refused to face the question of what should be done if the Dutch did call upon us to act, if the French, as of course they would, declined to explain. It was merely his own belief in the good sense and faith of the French that he opposed to the traditional policy of civilised nations in pursuance of treaty obligations. So again in 1803 he opposed the renewal of the war because he believed in the good faith of Buonaparte, and knew that Addington was a blunderer and an incapable, but in 1806 he found that he was wrong.

It was just that preference of personal conviction to the

results of hard political thinking as the motive of policy, which made matter-of-fact Englishmen distrust Fox as a political leader, and made them sometimes think that he had no political principles. In that they did him a grievous injustice. He used the time-honoured formulæ of party politics so frequently, at a time when to most men they had shrunk and withered into mere skeletons, that people could not realise that he was reclothing them again with flesh and blood, and inspiring them with new life for a fresh struggle under the old banners. The independence of Parliament—civil and religious liberty—the glorious constitution of 1688, had got to be formulæ as hollow as the immortal principle of '89 sound to us now. Their original meaning had become exhausted, and they were usually intended to mean just what anybody chose. But in Fox's mouth they had a very definite meaning. They meant the crushing of the royal influence in government, the establishment of a responsible Prime Ministership, the reform of Parliament, and the removal of political disabilities from Nonconformists. But here again, as in matters of external policy, he stopped short just where he should have gone on. He contented himself with the principle, he shrunk from translating his principle into action. In all these questions he was content to play the second part, to follow where others led. The scheme for the Reform of Parliament belonged to Pitt, and was appropriated by Grey. That for the removal of Nonconformists' disabilities Fox inherited from Beaufoy, that for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was Wilberforce's own. In no one of these measures, which are the best evidence of Fox's insight as a statesman, which are the great historical triumphs of the Whig party, did Fox himself take the initiative. He did not even give himself the

trouble to place them before Parliament, in reasoned and considered legislative form. It is not too much to say that at his death, not one of them had definitely taken rank as essential parts of the Whig policy. Yet these are the measures upon which depends the reputation of Fox as the statesman, to whom the policy brought to such a glorious conclusion in 1829 and 1832 is mainly due. If Fox is to be considered as the author of a new departure in Whig policy, if his separation from Burke is to mean anything in the history of political principle, if in any sense whatever he is to be looked upon as the father of the Whigs of '32, these are the measures by which that claim will be judged. It is fatal to his reputation as a serious statesman, that not one of them was during his lifetime permanently associated with his name. It is to his honour as a politician that they all received his support. It was to the advantage of his party, that by his support he was enabled to pass them to his followers as a legacy of which they could make better use than he had done.

There is in fact a real want of political ambition in Fox. It was that which made him recoil when the true test of statesmanship, as of everything else great in this world, presented itself to him—the imperative necessity for taking trouble. Great political successes are not won on the floor of the House of Commons amid the plaudits of an excited crowd, they are won in the office, or the study, amid statistics and reports. Fox never could bring himself to understand this. Eager, impulsive, and impetuous, he would throw himself into the fray when the debate came on, and speak with a conviction all the more positive because it was born of the necessities of the moment, but when the excitement had passed it was very difficult to get him to attend to the humdrum business of preparing

and arranging for the next step. Sir Gilbert Elliot tells us that he was curiously vacillating and hesitating in making up his mind.

"This I fear," he says, "is a habitual defect in Fox, who has a great difficulty or backwardness in resolving as if he had no interest or no judgment in the affairs that are depending, and at last lets anybody else decide for him."

His indecision sprang not from want of will but from real want of interest. He could take trouble enough about a disputed reading in Homer, he would not decide whether the Opposition should start a candidate for the office of Speaker, until the day before that on which Parliament was to meet. Indolence was a fault which ran through the whole of Fox's life, political and social. Perhaps it was too much to demand of a statesman, who was always in a hopeless minority, that he should master details and apply principles with the avidity of one for whom the gates of power are just opening in the distance, but the result was none the less disastrous. Fox called in sentiment to supply the place of knowledge—sentiment, it is true, which sprang from a healthy and sound English heart, and was checked by an eminently sensible mind, but still sentiment which was very dangerous as an important element in a statesman's policy at the time of the French Revolution. What England wanted was a leader with the political sympathies of Fox, and the philosophical depth and practical mind of Burke. What she got was, on the one side the conventional commonplace selfishness of Pitt, and on the other side in Fox, a real zeal for liberty, which was inspiring and essentially true, but which could do nothing to solve the difficulties of the hour. To tell the English nation that the revolution of 1789 was a great step on the path of liberty, at a time when it had led to the overthrow of all the institutions

with which in England liberty had been bound up, was as pernicious as it was useless. It sprang from an opinion which had its root in sentiment, not in reason. It destroyed the confidence of the British nation in Fox as a practical politician, and it did much to hand England over, as the only alternative, a victim to the terror of the Tories.

Where then is the secret of Fox's great influence over contemporaries, of his position in the page of history? It is to be found in his oratory and in his personal attractiveness. Undistinguished as a statesman, except in the department of foreign politics, a failure as a party leader, he was unrivalled in debate. On the floor of the House of Commons he never met his match. Sheridan had more wit, Pitt more declamatory power, Erskine more elegance, Tierney more polish, but the oratory of Fox outshone them all in the qualities which go straight to the heart. Robustness and earnestness were its two main characteristics. In the whole range of Fox's speeches there is not to be found a mean thought or an affectation. No doubt the charm of his personality greatly assisted the effect of his oratory. His speeches were rarely prepared beforehand. The words and expressions came straight out of a mind inspired by a strong masculine reason, and corrected by a faultless taste. "Nature and simplicity," said Sir G. Elliot, "were the true characteristic qualities of his eloquence." The mannerisms and the self-consciousness of a trained orator were exceedingly distasteful to him. Even Sheridan's prepared impromptus grated against his ear. The very openness, and complete absence of reserve, with which he poured out his whole heart to his audience took them by storm. The presence of the reporter, the vision of next morning's paper would have been fatal to him, if he had

stopped to think of them. It is the whole personality of the man, not this or that particular quality, that gave him his power. The generosity of his heart, the openness of his mind, the simplicity of his nature, the robustness of his intellect, the felicity of his expression, the fire of his indignation, the earnestness of his sympathy, the vigour of his conviction,—all these combined in a personality which men might fly from in questioning doubt, or might worship in trusting love, but could not criticise. "There are but forty of them," said Thurlow of the Opposition of 1793, "but there is not one of them who would not be willingly hanged for Fox."

A tribute such as this, coming too from an enemy, is not lightly to be disregarded. When the grave closed over Fox many thousands in England who had never seen him and never heard him felt that they had lost a friend. All Englishmen knew that a light had gone from the world, and England was the debtor to nature for the loan of one of those rare spirits who sum up in themselves the gifts and the powers of many types of ordinary men.

"A power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss,
But when the great and good depart,
What is it *more* than this?
That Man who is by God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return:
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?"

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